# THE TEXAS RANGERS

BY JOHN MILIUS

11 DECEMBER, 1991

Beefsteak when I'm hungry,
Red liquor when I'm dry.
Greenbacks when I'm hard up,
Religion when I die.

You may boast of your knowledge,
And brag of your sense.
'Twill all be forgotten,
A hundred years hence.

A true Story! Told wherever possible with actual words and deeds.

Part I

"To all you Texas Rangers
Wherever you may be,
I'll tell you of some troubles
That happened unto me.
My name is nothin extra,
So that I will not tell.
Here's to McNelly's Rangers,
You know I wish you well.

'Twas at the age of seventeen
I joined the jolly band.
We marched from San Antonio
unto the Rio Grande.
McNelly he done told us,
Perhaps he thought it right,
We're bound to cross the river Boys
You know we'll have to fight."

The Texas Ranger

--a song of the 1870's

# RUNNING AWAY

THE PRAIRIE--Vast and unmarked by fences or structures. The grass long and yellow, it seemed to undulate like a sleepless sea. Great gray and purple clouds pile up on a distant horizon and the smell of rain is sweet and fresh.

A HORSEMAN--Going full out enters the panorama heading toward the darkening sky. The horse, a big blooded sorrel holds his head high and covers ground in a clipped powerful gait. The rider bends low on the horse's neck and looks back over his shoulder and whips the withers with a leather strap. He mounts a small rise and pulls the animal around in a sliding stop, sitting back easily in the saddle.

The rider is a young man, well built, and he sits on the horse gracefully. He wears an open white shirt, with store bought pants and boots, but he has no hat, spurs, pistol or the other equipage of the open plains. Indeed, he doesn't look at all prepared to be where he is.

CLOSE YOUNG MAN--LINCOLN ROGERS DUNNISON--He has handsome features and an easy smile at other times, but now his face is strained with worry. He looks back where he's come from as if to make note of the distance he's travelled. The horse breathes hard and prances. He squints at the endless unbroken distance of grass and makes out a thin wisp of dust. He turns and looks back towards the storm.

DUNNISON (V.O.)
Dear Father--my situation has changed abruptly in life. Just yesterday it seems that I was making good progress as a drummer of medicinal tinctures.

P.O.V. DUNNISON--A faint wisp of black smoke not much more than the dust in the opposite direction can be seen. But this wisp is moving.

DUNNISON (V.O.) (CONT'D)
It all came unraveled when I was visiting a client who happened to be a widow of some means, for this country.

CLOSE DUNNISON--He stands in the stirrups and sees the smoke attached to a train, it's thin dark rail line unnaturally crossing the horizon. A hinted smile crosses his visage as he whips his mount down towards it.

DUNNISON (V.O.) (CONT'D)
She and I were making a business arrangement.

FLASHBACK TO:

DUNNISON--AN ATTRACTIVE WOMAN--In her thirties pulse breathlessly in the final throws of heated lovemaking. Her shapely leg stretches out and her toe catches the ring of the window shade.

WIDOW (O.S.)
Don't--don't stop--whatever you do.

The shade rolls up with a snap revealing MOUNTED MEN who have just ridden up. They look in. The noise of the shade also brings young Dunnison's head upright. He looks to see what it is, and sees instead the horsemen staring in with their mouths agape.

CUT TO:

DUNNISON--Riding hell for leather. The dust forms up behind him, the train still a long ways away.

DUNNISON (V.O.)
Anyway, we couldn't agree on terms when we were rudely interrupted by her suitor who was none other than the local Constable. It is my feeling these two were having a "liaison" and guilt threw the fellow into a terrible jealous rage.

FLASHBACK TO:

THE GLASS--Of the living room window blows in from a shotgun blast as Dunnison runs by pulling on his pants. The falling glass reveals darkly clad MEN below.

MAN
Shoot! Shoot him again Rufus!

The widow stands in the doorway clad only in a whalebone corset looking quite fetching. She laughs a low dusty laugh filled with vitality and sin and points towards the back porch.

DUNNISON (V.O.)
Believe me Father, he was mistaken in his assumptions!

Outside, Dunnison jumps into the stirrups of an already moving horse holding his boots and shirt--and a shot echoes from the house accompanied by vicious yelling from a man and a woman.

CUT TO:

THE TRAIN--Which is rumbling across the near horizon at a good clip. The boy whips his horse on in a frantic effort to intercept. The train has only a coaler and two cars--one is for baggage. It leaves a long black plume which dissolves into the dark gray of the rain clouds.

(CONTINUED)

DUNNISON (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Needless to say I was left with nothing but the money in my belt and a good horse--not my own--that being left at the widow's.

He looks over his shoulder and sees that the dust behind him is gaining. It starts to rain.

DUNNISON (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I figured it was an even trade but they did not see it that way.

Indeed, the dust behind him has become a GROUP OF RIDERS.

DUNNISON (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I know I've disappointed you Father. I know you and Mother had such high hopes for me, but this time it was not MY fault. I am now traveling to the South where there are new opportunities.

He draws close to the thundering rails--the coaler slides by him, a MEXICAN FIREMAN watches with indifference--then the baggage car slides past, and finally the passenger car whose FEW OCCUPANTS rush to the windows.

DUNNISON (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Despite what you think of my abilities and the troubles I've brought you before--

Dunnison stares into the face of a LEAN MAN with a dark moustache in a large black hat. The man stares at the boy. There was a gulf between them, and then the car passes. The railing at it's back offers an opportunity.

DUNNISON (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I am learning to acquit myself in this world on my own.

With that he jumps, catches the railing and swings up onto the platform. A rich smile breaks across his face as he looks back at the receding horsemen. He waves goodbye and steps into the rumbling car.

TRAIN TO LAREDO

THE CAR--Is not full, mostly MEXICAN FAMILIES and a few WHITE WOMEN with OLD NEGRO ATTENDANTS. Dunnison enters and can't help being caught in the gaze of the lean man in the black coat and hat. The man sits on the edge of his seat apprehensive, almost about to spring at Dunnison. His eyes are remarkable in that they are cold blue devoid of emotion. He looks over Dunnison's shoulder at the horse that is falling behind. The CONDUCTOR comes between them.

CONDUCTOR
You left your horse outside.

They both look as the Riders press on towards the animal.

DUNNISON (CONT'D)
I made a swap--but they didn't see it fair.

This doesn't really explain anything to anybody.

DUNNISON (CONT'D)
I do not fret the loss but he had a forty dollar saddle.

CONDUCTOR
That is not my concern--just pay for you ticket.

Dunnison fumbles with his belt--all eyes on him.

CONDUCTOR (CONT'D)
Fifty cents--one way--seventy five round--

DUNNISON
One way.

He gives him the fare.

DUNNISON (CONT'D)
Uh--there are no other stops between here and Laredo?

CONDUCTOR
Sit down.

Dunnison moves forward in the car as if to be further away from his troubles, and sits behind the darkly clothed stranger who looks him over.

DUNNISON
Going to Laredo I presume?

No answer.

DUNNISON (CONT'D)
Ladies--

He smiles at some OLDER WOMEN and a MEXICAN FAMILY.

CUT TO:

THE TRAIN--Approaching in the distance--in the foreground FIVE RIDERS under a water tower. ONE of them prances his horse onto the tracks and waves. The train slows and comes to a stop--the ENGINEER leaning out--and steam billowing.

CUT TO:

CLOSE DUNNISON--Alarmed--the conductor walks by.

DUNNISON
I thought there were no other stops.

CONDUCTOR
Unscheduled.

He goes to the back and opens the heavy door. Shadows precede the figures boarding, and the chink of spurs can be heard. A look of apprehension crosses the conductor's face as he is suddenly confronted with the meanest looking HOMBRE this side of the Pecos. The man has a scar down through his right eye, wears a wide sombrero, and has two dissimilar pistols belted to his waist, the ammunition glittering. THREE OTHER SIMILAR CHARACTERS follow--each one huge, dirty and armed. They hand the conductor tickets.

MEAN HOMBRE
Bought in San Antone'.

CONDUCTOR
Why didn't you get on there?

OTHER HOMBRE
Cause we got on here--Stupid.

The conductor backs up making a show of counting his tickets. The men sit down, clanking and chinking as the train pulls out. The leader takes out a long black cigar. One of his compadres offers a huge wicked Bowie knife to cut it with.

THE LADIES--In the car are of course alarmed and whisper back and forth to each other. A NEGRO SERVANT seems to be reciting something.

THE LEADER--Licks his cigar in a lascivious manner before cutting it. The man on his left makes no pretenses about staring at the ladies. He sticks his tongue out, licking his lips and makes heavy breathing sounds.

OTHER HOMBRE
What's you staring at nigger.

The Negro servant turns away. He helps his charges move towards the front of the car. The men smile and scrutinize each person.

CLOSE DUNNISON--He is quite concerned. Out of the frying pan--he looks around and sees the dark stranger. He looks smaller than before. He's wiry and sunken in his posture--but his eyes, cold blue, seem incapable of looking at anything close--as though they are always noting some distant occurrence on the horizon. The stranger looks over to the men at the back of the car, appraising them like so many head of beef. He looks at the Negro who is terrified, and the women. He smiles courteously and then his gaze catches Dunnison. In a quiet fluid motion he slips from his seat to the one next to Dunnison.

(CONTINUED)

STRANGER
Perhaps you have noted something is afoot.

DUNNISON
It seems that way.

STRANGER
You see there is a riot in Laredo and they sent for the Texas Ranger--these fellows don't look like Texas Rangers do they?

DUNNISON
No.

STRANGER
--And you wouldn't be a Ranger would you?
--No didn't think so.

He looks back at the men.

STRANGER (CONT'D)
Yep--they're lookin' for him--that's for sure.

DUNNISON
What do they want?

STRANGER
Why to kill him--'fore he gets to Laredo--
What else? I better talk to these gentlemen.

He gets up--and strolls back down the aisle. Though he's not a big man, something about him seems to suddenly fill the car. He stops for a second and coughs deeply, a racking consumptive cough. His left hand comes up with a handkerchief--his right still free. With the cough the bad men come up erect. One of them stands. Their hands gripping the handles of their pistols.

LEADER
McNelly!

The stranger puts the handkerchief in his pocket and comes out with a round badge--a star made from a silver coin. He pins it on his breast pocket. His right hand sweeps his coat back revealing the polished walnut grip of a Colt Navy.

STRANGER
That's right. I'm McNelly--Seems this car is--crowded. You Boys are gonna have to get off.

OTHER HOMBRE
Ain't no stops between here and Laredo.

MCNELLY
That's what I mean Son.

McNelly is about thirty five. The man he speaks to is well seasoned.

LEADER
Four on one ain't no dogfall--Ranger!

McNelly sweeps back his other hand revealing a Colt Navy on his left side.

MCNELLY
I'm wearing two guns Boys. That means some of you are gonna have to die twice.

CLOSE DUNNISON--OTHERS--He can't believe it. A WOMAN covers her eyes, the old Negro Man drops his jaw.

A HAND PULLS IRON.

CLOSE MCNELLY--His gun is already out--he extends it smoothly. The leader's gun explodes in fire and gray smoke--McNelly's coat flicks back. McNelly's gun at eye level now blasts smoke and soot and places the ball through the leader's right eye! He reels over heavily on the others. McNelly shoots another's hat off and misses clean with the third shot. Two of their guns go off shattering a window and an oil lamp--causing a small fire! Things are getting hot. Dunnison pushes himself against a window as a bullet seems to whiz by--but the Ranger just stands his ground and fires again. By now the bad men have dropped down behind the seats. McNelly walks forward, fires twice, shattering wood.

CLOSE MCNELLY--He executes a superb "Border Hand Shift"--flipping his empty revolver into the air and filling his good hand with the other and catching the empty--all the while shooting. But by now the bad men have had enough. They hold their hands up, dropping iron.

BAD MAN
Don't kill me! Circumstance drove me to this luck!

McNelly raises his gun. Gun smoke is thick between them. The old Negro swats out the fire in the back with his coat.

MCNELLY
Jump!

He motions to the back door.

BAD MAN
We cain't jump--

MCNELLY
I still got four left.

He waves his pistol. They scurry to the door--they open it. He blasts once through the window.

MCNELLY (CONT'D)
Take him with you.

He points at the corpse of the leader. They leap back and drag him through the door. They hesitate. McNelly fires again and walks forward. They jump from the railing. McNelly walks out and kicks the corpse over like so much trash. Smoke rushes out past him. People in the train gasp and stare. The fire is out and the MEXICAN WOMEN cross themselves. McNelly walks back in holstering his weapons.

MCNELLY (CONT'D) (to train Passengers)
I'm Captain McNelly, Texas Rangers. These Hombres wished me bad fortune--don't expect any more of it.

They all cheer. McNelly sits down ignoring it all.

DUNNISON
You got him in the right eye Sir!

MCNELLY
--Was aiming for his left--I guess I'd become excited--Sit down, Son.

DISSOLVE TO:

ONE RIOT

LAREDO--The train pulls into the station which is crowded with PEOPLE. These people are the town's better citizens. The bad element are obviously at the riot. Laredo in those days was not a big town, but it had a charming Mexican flavor if you favored low adobe buildings painted in pastel colors and a lot of stray dogs and burros. Laredo's MAYOR and a CONTINGENT OF SURVEYORS meet the train. McNelly gets off first, his badge still on his coat.

MAYOR
You with the Rangers?

MCNELLY
I'm the Ranger. What do you want?

MAYOR (looking inside the train)
There's only one of you?

MCNELLY
You ain't got but one riot--Let's see where you put it.

The crowd surges around with McNelly leading. Dunnison squeezes out of the train and falls in behind.

CUT TO:

FRONT STREET--The crowd with McNelly and the Mayor at the front crosses the railroad tracks and walks towards the Rio Grande. This area is the "red light" district and contains the entertainment businesses--cantinas, bordellos, lawyers and bailbondsmen. It is nicely shaded by large cottonwoods but mostly it's of run-down shanty construction. The crowd is quite boisterous gaining confidence as it starts up the street when a shot rings out. Suddenly everyone scatters for the trees and buildings leaving McNelly alone.

CLOSE DUNNISON--He watches from behind several horses. McNelly walks up the street. SEVERAL MEN walk out on porches.

ANOTHER GROUP assembles in the street. A DRUNKEN THUG staggers towards McNelly with a pistol drawn. McNelly doesn't stop but walks right up to the man. The thug thrusts his long barreled Remington into McNelly's stomach.

CLOSE MCNELLY--THUG--They stare.

THUG
I dance fandango with rattlesnakes--
ain't afeared of hellfire. Die you must.

McNelly twists sideways effortlessly and takes the gun away twisting it out of his hand and hits him across the head with it. Loose balls fall from the cylinder and the man falls heavily. McNelly draws his own pistols and fires over the crowd scattering them. He fires at the men on the porches, making them drop or flee inside. As he shoots, the street is suddenly alive with HORSEMEN. About TEN MEN armed with rifles form a line behind McNelly. OTHERS appear from the sides of the buildings and line up behind the crowd surrounding them. The horsemen are colorfully dressed in wide sombreros and chaps. They are young men and move with military precision.

MCNELLY
Sergeant Armstrong--

A BIG BLONDE HAIRED MAN on a horse behind McNelly moves closer.

ARMSTRONG
The Company is formed Cap'n.

McNelly fires again in the air.

MCNELLY (to Townspeople)
Now all you who can hear me. I'm
McNelly, Texas Rangers. I gotta' book
here full a warrants from Austin--Show 'em
the book Corporal Rudd.

A RED HAIRED MAN with a derby hat displays a large book from horseback.

(CONTINUED)

MCNELLY (CONT'D)
If your name's in this book you got two choices. There's a four o'clock train. Be on it or run after it.

He turns around and walks back through his men.

CUT TO:

SIX KINGS

NIGHT ON FRONT STREET--The saloons are empty, dust and tumbleweeds blow through the pools of light that leak out the doors. Even the few horses are melancholy and hold their heads down, not wanting to go anywhere. If there was a riot here for the last week you sure would never believe it. Dunnison is feeling the early October chill. He has no coat, nothing but the money in his belt. He walks along and peers into one of the Cantinas. A couple of OLD MEN sit at a far table in a filthy room. In the distance a WOMAN sings "La Golandrina(The Swallow)"--it seems far away, across the river. Dunnison looks into one of the larger establishments. Most of the lights are out, but it is an ornate lusty place, with red walls and cracked paintings of nudes. There's lots of mirrors and wood--and the whole place is made more cavernous by the lack of people. A PORTLY BARTENDER polishes glasses, and in the far corner a GROUP OF MEN seem to be playing cards in a partitioned corner. Dunnison pushes through the swinging doors which slap each other with a paddling sound.

THE MEN--ONE of them winks in his seat. He is blonde and has flashing maniacal eyes. His hat is thrown back on his head, held by a brightly braided cord. In his hand is a gleaming Colt Peacemaker--cocked!

CLOSE DUNNISON--He throws his hands up. Helpless.

CLOSE MEN--The blonde man smiles sadistically. ANOTHER--leaned back in a chair is darkly handsome.

HANDSOME STRANGER
Put it down Wes--you scared McNelly's coming back?

Wes spins his gun into his holster.

HANDSOME STRANGER (CONT'D)
You don't look like a Texas Ranger--Boy--

DUNNISON
No Sir--I'm no Ranger--That's the second time someone--

HANDSOME STRANGER
How come they ain't scared you off Kid?

(CONTINUED)

DUNNISON
My name's not in their book.

STRANGER
Neither is mine--What're you looking for?

DUNNISON
A beer--a good meal and a chance to better my lot.

STRANGER
Come on over here.

Dunnison walks over. The stranger is indeed incredibly fine of feature, well built, and dressed in the finest Vaquero manner with silver conchos on his wristlets, and a great flowing silk scarf of many colors. He has an absolutely disarming smile and is obviously the boss of this group.

STRANGER (CONT'D)
I suppose you're looking for work? Sit down.

He pulls a chair out. The blonde man stares at him with the coldest blue eyes he's ever seen.

STRANGER (CONT'D)
What's your name Kid?

DUNNISON
Lincoln Rogers Dunnison.

BLONDE MAN
Lincoln--I don't sit with no one called that.

STRANGER
Calm down Wes--don't you mind him Kid--Name's Fisher, King Fisher--and this here's my friend, Wes Hardin. Perhaps you heard of him?

DUNNISON
No Sir.

KING FISHER
Just as well Son. Don't know if I can help you about work Son--but perhaps a game of chance?

DUNNISON
That would be acceptable Sir.

CUT TO:

CLOSE DUNNISON'S HANDS--Cutting, shuffling, and dealing the deck like a riverboat professional.

THE OTHERS LOOK--King Fisher smiles that smile, even the real gambler who is seated is impressed.

CLOSE DUNNISON--He looks at his cards, expressionless--He looks out expressionless. He has done this before.

DUNNISON
I raise and take one.

CLOSE DUNNISON.

DUNNISON (CONT'D)
I raise again.

CUT TO:

DUNNISON--Raking in his winnings.

DUNNISON
You want me to deal--

FISHER
Go ahead Son.

He cuts and deals.

CLOSE HARDIN--His eyes diamond hard--that sadistic grin again.

HARDIN
I raise.

CLOSE FISHER--He looks at Hardin--then back at the others.

FISHER
You can't read a man with eyes like Wes--I'll match it. What about you?

CLOSE GAMBLER--He's scared of these men.

GAMBLER
I'm out.

CLOSE DUNNISON--EXPRESSIONLESS.

FISHER (O.S.)
You--Lincoln?

DUNNISON
I'm in.

FISHER (O.S.)
Let's see 'em.

(CONTINUED)

TABLE--The three men lay down their hands--all are different--with Fisher's the best--but what is surprising is that six Kings are represented. They all look up slowly.

FISHER
My-my. That don't beat all. It seems that there are six Kings here and I thought a deck had only four.

HARDIN
I say you're cheating Kid.

He whips out his nickeled long barreled Colt. Equally fast, King Fisher grabs it out of his hand but it goes off. Everyone ducks--smoke drifts up. Fisher whips Hardin across the face with the gun sending him sprawling.

FISHER
You quit whipping this thing out when there ain't no reason.

He turns to Dunnison still holding the gun.

FISHER (CONT'D)
Whatta' you expect of someone who shot a man for snoring.

DUNNISON
Snoring?

FISHER
That's right Lincoln. Now it seems that one of you is dishonest.

Fisher shakes his head no-no.

FISHER (CONT'D)
That usually gets a man dead. But since you're a stranger and so young with so much life ahead of you, I'll accept what's on the table.

Dunnison pushes it over quickly.

FISHER (CONT'D)
--And your money belt.

Dunnison hesitates. Fisher puts the gun down hard on the table--pushes it over to him. He takes the belt off.

DUNNISON
I'll give you the money but I can't hold my pants up.

FISHER
You got two hands don't you?

He motions for him to get out. Dunnison heads for the door. Suddenly a gleaming silver long barrel appears in Fisher's hand as if by Providence. He fires at Dunnison's feet. Dunnison runs out holding his pants up.

FISHER (CONT'D)
So long Lincoln.

He sits back, smiles the most winning smile and looks over at Hardin who is nursing his face.

FISHER (CONT'D)
John Westley--cheating at cards again.

CUT TO:

JOINING UP

DUNNISON--TWILIGHT--In the light of late afternoon he sits in the back of a wagon filled with supplies. Next to him is a freshly slaughtered hog. He doesn't look much better than the pork. His eyes are sunken, his clothes filthy, hair messed. What was a firm handsome face has the tarnish of defeat. Life seems to be catching up to Lincoln Rogers Dunnison.

DUNNISON (V.O.)
If I described the events I've seen, you'd say I was getting them from a dime novel. But Father, the West is more than I bargained for. I've taken a drastic step.

He passes a remuda of horses being worked in by TWO SKILLED HANDS. A tent and covered wagon sit under the cottonwoods, fires can be seen. A HUGE BLACK MAN, THE COOK, barks orders and MEN scurry about.

DUNNISON (V.O.) (CONT'D)
The Ranger Company was camped outside of town--I heard they were expanding their ranks--

CUT TO:

A YOUNG MAN--Actually at this point still a boy of seventeen. Big, raw boned with a capable if awkward look about him. He stands nervously with his tattered Mississippi hat in his hand. One thing that characterizes this lad is that he's durable.

YOUNG MAN
My name Sir is George Durham--

George shifts on his almost bare feet. He stands before McNelly, Sergeant Armstrong and Corporal Rudd. They eat while McNelly chews on a black cigar. The big Black Cook sits next to McNelly.

(CONTINUED)

DURHAM
My father served with you Sir in Louisiana. His name was Jedediah Durham.

The Black Cook smiles and laughs.

SCIPIO (The Cook)
Your daddy stole a horse for me once, Boy.

MCNELLY
Scipio here don't mean to say your daddy was a horsethief. Jed Durham was a fine man, a good soldier. He had a taste for Yankee horseflesh.

DURHAM
You ate the Yankee horse my daddy stole for you?

MCNELLY
Scipio sees everything from the view of food. That's a cook for you. Now I loaned Jed Durham to General Forrest's command. I hear say he served with distinction.

DURHAM
He did Sir.

He pulls something from his pocket--a medal.

DURHAM (CONT'D)
General Forrest pinned this on my daddy's breast.

He sniffles--breaks down--wipes his eyes.

MCNELLY
It's alright Son--I take your daddy passed on.

DURHAM
He did Sir--So'd my ma and my little brother Billy. Were'nt nothing left in Georgia after the War. Broke my daddy's heart. Sometimes we ate sawdust an' he was a proud man. He survived the War but he didn't survive Sherman.

MCNELLY
How'd you get so big eating sawdust Son?

Durham looks up sharply.

DURHAM
I learned to steal Sir--I learned good. When my daddy died he said go to Texas
(MORE)

DURHAM (CONT'D)
and find Cap'n McNelly. He'll make something of you. So here I am Sir.

SCIPIO
He rode all the way from Georgia on that.

He points to a totally sway-backed old plow horse.

DURHAM
That's Judy Sir.

MCNELLY
If you got here on Judy, you'll do Son. Forty dollars a month and found. Looks like you'd like a meal. Scipio, he needs some beef--Who's next?

Durham goes with Scipio--and Dunnison takes his place before the firelight.

MCNELLY (CONT'D)
Oh yes--the young man who favors train travel to a good horse. I believe you had business in Laredo?

DUNNISON
My connections proved to be erroneous Sir. They left town--on the four o'clock train.

MCNELLY
Then they were no damn good Son.

DUNNISON
I hardly think Mr. Rockefeller would have given my father a contact of bad character.

MCNELLY
Who is this Mr. Rockefeller?

DUNNISON
An associate of my father Sir, in the petroleum business.

MCNELLY
Petroleum?

DUNNISON
Oil Sir--some call it "black gold".

MCNELLY
An your Pappy's in this "black gold" business?

DUNNISON
No Sir--he owns Dunnison Drilling of Pennsylvania--

MCNELLY
That's enough Son--I take it you are rich?

DUNNISON
I was raised well Sir, but have fallen on hard circumstances. You see Sir, I--

MCNELLY
Is it a long story? I'm sure we'll hear it in good time. Do you write like you talk?

DUNNISON
I suppose so.

MCNELLY
Good, because I don't.

DUNNISON
You have a fine vocabulary Sir.

MCNELLY
It was a long war and folks like to talk over campfires. Forty dollars a month and found. We'll deduct the cost of horse and weapons.

Dunnison just stands there.

MCNELLY (CONT'D)
What is your name Son?

DUNNISON
Lincoln Rogers Dunnison.

ARMSTRONG
Lincoln?

DUNNISON
Sir--you know nothing of my character.

MCNELLY
We'll find out about that right quick, Boy. Now speaking of character, you write your pappy and tell him I threw Mr. Rockefeller's friend out a' town--and tell your Pappy not to turn his back on Mr. Rockefeller either--That's all--

CUT TO:

DUNNISON AND DURHAM--Sitting on the edge of camp--SOME of the Company are sleeping, OTHERS talk, a RANGER sings softly "The Rose of Alabama", an old Civil War song. The Rangers are

almost all young men, teens and early twenties, but they have a sense of capability about them. AN OLDER RANGER walks over with two bedrolls. Indeed, this is the only middle aged Ranger in the whole company. He is grizzled but has a pleasant demeanor--however he wears two of the latest Colt's revolvers in a manner that denotes a certain danger. He drops the bedrolls before them.

OLD RANGER
Durham and Dunnison.

They nod.

OLD RANGER (CONT'D)
I'm Frank--call me Old Frank--Sleep however you want but don't get too close to that cot over there.

He points to an Army cot.

OLD FRANK (CONT'D)
That's Sergeant Armstrong--he's liable to mistake you for a snake.

He leaves.

DURHAM
George Durham from Georgia--I guess we're in this together.

DUNNISON
Lincoln Dunnison.

He shakes his hand.

DURHAM
Lincoln? Ain't that life. I got a partner named Lincoln--

Dunnison rolls out his bedroll as does Durham.

DURHAM (CONT'D)
--Could a' been Sherman I suppose. You ever sleep on the ground Lincoln?

DUNNISON
I try to find a warm bed and it's contents.

DURHAM
Nothing to it--just dig--

He does.

DURHAM (CONT'D)
--Yourself a little hip hole--comfy--an' in the morning be sure an' empty out your boots?

DUNNISON
What gets in them?

DURHAM
Critters.

He kneels by his bedroll.

DUNNISON
What're you doing?

DURHAM
Saying my prayers.

Dunnison watches--Durham finishes and gets under his blankets like he was crawling into a feather four poster.

DURHAM (CONT'D)
Nighty nite.

DISSOLVE TO:

THE PRAIRIE SKY--Streaked with dawn.

CLOSE DUNNISON--He stirs awake to the sound of hoofbeats on the ground. He has obviously not slept that well. Durham is already up--his bedroll rolled and sitting there. Horses are being brought in, a fire crackles, and something sizzles in a skillet. All around MEN stir.

DURHAM
Top of the morning to you Lincoln.

DUNNISON
Uh--same to you George.

SCIPIO (yelling)
C'mon and get it. You be late an' all you'll get is the smell.

They both hear a vicious hissing rattling sound and turn their heads.

ARMSTRONG--Pulling himself up on his army cot. He doesn't put his feet down because two large diamond back rattlers are coiled next to his boots. Nobody seems to take much notice. Armstrong himself casually pulls his Henry repeating rifle from his saddle scabbard and pokes at the snakes until they strike at the barrel.

ARMSTRONG
C'mon git along there--Shoo--

Having expended themselves, the snakes quickly slither into the brush.

CLOSE DUNNISON--Amazed.

DUNNISON
Get along there--Shoo?

Armstrong shakes his boots and pulls them on rubbing his eyes. Dunnison reaches for his boots.

DURHAM
Turn 'em up.

He does--a scorpion falls out of one. Suddenly shots ring out in rapid succession. They turn.

MCNELLY--Alone silhouetted against the dawn darkly, fires his guns from his hip into a distant horizon. Armstrong walks past the Boys.

DURHAM
What's he shooting at?

ARMSTRONG
Nothin'--He's emptying his loads. Figure's moisture and such can get into the caps. Load's only good for a day an' a night.

Scipio walks up and takes the two revolvers.

ARMSTRONG (CONT'D) (admiringly)
He don't trust ca'tridge guns but he trusts Scipio. He done raised the Cap'n from a boy.

Scipio takes the guns off to clean, oil, load and prime while McNelly just walks away off towards the horizon staring, his thoughts to himself.

CUT TO:

SKILLET--FULL OF BACON--Another with biscuits, and another with beef frying in bacon grease.

CUT TO:

DUNNISON--Eating, his mouth full. He looks at a biscuit, it's light as a feather and tasty. Durham has no problem with food--his tin plate is filled with bacon, beef, everything and it is emptying fast. The boy knows how to eat.

CUT TO:

ROPE CORRAL--The remuda runs around in a hastily set up rope corral. A few MOUNTED RANGERS stand around as THREE BOYS with lariats step out towards the milling horses.

ARMSTRONG
Get me Windy.

RUDD
I'd prefer Scar.

OLD FRANK
I'll take Tabby Cat--the little sorrel.

The three ropers are fine hands and look into the dim light identifying the horses as they go by. With an effortless grace they sling the loop of the lariat out into space, and a horse is pulled up. Sometimes they throw backhanded a particularly graceful motion called a hoolihan. It's now that we see the real nature of these Rangers. None are well dressed or outfitted, and all are somewhat ragged, but two characteristics predominate. They are YOUNG, all between the ages of 17 to 21, and they are skilled. They go about their business in the cool practiced manner of master workmen. Most of these boys were cowpunchers before this, and they know their way around--but their faces are still fresh and innocent. Even Rudd and Armstrong are no more than 22 but THEY are men.

CORPORAL RUDD--Brings a nasty looking little mustang up to Dunnison. Durham calls after his Judy. Judy is not hard to catch.

RUDD
You do ride a bit Mr. Dunnison?

DUNNISON
I've done it before.

He hands him the reins. Dunnison looks the horse over. It's ears flatten. He turns him around and the horse relaxes. Dunnison swings quickly up. The horse starts violently but Dunnison spins him around and gains control. Rudd looks on with some appreciation.

DUNNISON
He was afraid of his shadow.

RUDD
Where did you learn that I might ask?

DUNNISON
Alexander the Great. His father Philip gave him a horse no one could ride. Afraid of his shadow. Alexander rode him through all his conquests. His name was--

RUDD
Bucephalus--I know the story.

CUT TO:

NEW BOYS

THE RANGER COMPANY--THIRTY MEN assembled, mounted in a semi-circle around McNelly and Armstrong. McNelly stares off past

them, as if he's seeing something happening a half mile away.

MCNELLY
--Be going south and east. Below the Nueces. Bandit country. Hell, it's amazing there's anyone else left there. General Cortina made a deal with the Spaniards in Cuba for beef and King Fisher an' his outlaw army are filling that contract. There'll be vigilantes too, and maybe Comanches. There's already over a thousand Yankee cavalry down there and y'know that dog don't hunt. Governor Coke hired me to clean it up. I hired you. Anyone wants to be paid off--now's the opportunity.

AN OLDER RANGER steps forward.

OLDER RANGER
We gonna cross the river?

MCNELLY
I'll ride to Mexico City if I think it's right Son.

OLDER RANGER
I ain't signed on to die in Old Mexico.

ANOTHER
Me neither.

STILL ANOTHER
I want my bones where my folks can find 'em. We ain't got a chance down there. I ain't riding against King Fisher and John Westley Hardin.

CLOSE DUNNISON--He tenses. Durham sits calmly on his nag, turns.

DURHAM
I'm scared as hell. How about you?

ANOTHER RANGER
Fisher's got more'n five hundred good Bravos--
What're we gonna do with thirty--Boys.

MCNELLY (harsh)
You are sworn by the State of Texas to uphold the Law. I have done it before. Now I am sorry you men feel this way--
Just ride over to the wagon an I'll pay you now. --Any others?

He looks at Dunnison--rides over.

MCNELLY (CONT'D)
What about you Lincoln--you game?

DUNNISON
I'm game Sir.

MCNELLY
Good, let's get to it. Sergeant Armstrong lead 'em out.

MONTAGE--RANGERS IN FILE--TWO ABREAST--Riding out over an endless prairie. A rider travels a half mile ahead and behind while two flanking riders drift along either side of the column.

DUNNISON (V.O.)
Don't tell Mother that I've done this--it'll only serve to bother--besides as soon as I'm back on my feet I'll find more appropriate endeavors. --But imagine it Father. Finding ME on the respectable side of Law and Order.

DUNNISON--DURHAM--Down the line, covered with dust. Durham's horse, Judy, has a distinctly uncomfortable gait.

DUNNISON
Your horse looks tired.

DURHAM
She's not used to this gait.

DUNNISON
Works better at a walk?

DURHAM
So do I--I don't see why every one has to get anywhere so fast anyway.

DUNNISON
You're a philosopher George Durham.

DURHAM
You think so?

At that point a YOUNG COWHAND rides up besides them. The boy looks about twelve, but he's got an easy going experience about him.

BOY
You the new Boys ain't you?

DURHAM
How old are you?

BOY
I'm supposed to keep an eye on you and fill out your dab.

DURHAM
What's a dab.

BOY
A dab's usual three or four Rangers--
We eat together--scout together.

DUNNISON
An' you're the experienced old veteran sent to show us the ways?

BOY
Oh hell no I'm only sixteen. I'm the youngest one here.
(to Durham)
How old are you?

DURHAM
Lot older than that.

BOY
Cap'n said you was seventeen.

DURHAM
What's your name old man?

BOY
Berry--Berry Smith.

DUNNISON
Like raspberry.

BERRY
Or strawberry--Berry--Enjoying your ride?

BOTH
Sure--Sure thing.

CUT TO:

DUSK--CAMPSITE--The Rangers situated around their wagon, a picket silhouetted on the horizon. McNelly sits in a tent looking out into the coming night. Dunnison sits beside him with paper and pencil.

MCNELLY
"--No idea how these boys will perform. The State of Emergency has prompted our taking the trail before sufficient training." You got that Son?

DUNNISON
"Taking the trail"--uh?

(CONTINUED)

MCNELLY
"Before sufficient training"
(he coughs)

MCNELLY (CONT'D)
"--before sufficient training--"
(coughs)
"--I intend to--"
(coughs)

He goes into a tremendous wheezing cough that drops him to his knee. He grabs at his hankerchief. He racks with the coughs. Sweat instantly covers his face and his body seems to have lost all it's strength. Dunnison leaps to his feet--doesn't know what to do.

DUNNISON
Anything I can do Sir!

He looks outside.

DUNNISON (CONT'D)
Sergeant Armstrong!

Scipio is there at the back of the tent. He wraps a blanket around McNelly--pulls out a flask of whiskey.

DUNNISON (CONT'D)
What can I do?

McNelly gathers himself together but can barely speak.

MCNELLY (whispers)
Don't go yellin'--
(he gasps)
--My troubles--all over camp.
(gasps)
--Tend to your--own Boy.

He sits down on the cot--takes the whiskey from Scipio and drinks. His eyes seem to focus ahead again.

DUNNISON
He shouldn't be out here in this cold.

MCNELLY
Don't you tell me who shouldn't be out here Son. Pick up your paper.

He does.

MCNELLY (CONT'D)
"I intend to start training the Company tomorrow--on the march." --You get that?

CUT TO:

MORNING--EVERYONE SITTING--Around the breakfast fire. Armstrong holds two muzzle-loading double-barreled shotguns. McNelly sits, wrapped in a blanket.

MCNELLY
The shotgun is your best bet horseback. We showed that time and again to Yankee Cavalry. Besides--for now it's all we got besides pistols. You will be issued a revolver and one of these--barrels will be cut to twenty four inches--

CUT TO:

CLOSE SHOTGUNS--Barrels being hacksawed off--and loaded with powder and rammed full of nails, tacks, and coarse shot.

A ROW OF WOODEN BARRELS--Several have old hats, sombreros or pumpkins on them.

HORSEMEN THUNDER BY--One at a time discharging their shotguns--which belch fire and thump the ground. Despite what you may think about shotguns, Reader, most of the Rangers miss. It's one thing to blast a fat pheasant, another to hit something from a galloping horse.

DUNNISON--A good horseman, thunders by and blows the pumpkin from a barrel.

MCNELLY--ARMSTRONG--Taking note.

DURHAM--Rides by, leans out too far on his side and hits the barrel in the center--blowing out barrel staves every which way, but his horse lurches away from him and he hits the ground heavily.

CLOSE DURHAM--Sitting there, he looks at his shotgun. Mud and prairie grass are in the end of the barrel. Dunnison and Berry walk their horses over to him smiling down. McNelly looks on from a distance.

MCNELLY
Don't just stand there, help him up Son.

CUT TO:

THE COMPANY--ON THE TRAIL--Dust blows in the distance, the sun is hot, oppressive and the Boys are tired.

MCNELLY
Battle formation.

RUDD (yelling)
Five abreast! --Five yards between you!

(CONTINUED)

The men assemble into a line across the prairie.

ARMSTRONG
Flankriders--out!

Two riders gallop out on the flanks.

MCNELLY
Durham, Dunnison, Smith--take up the drag.

CLOSE BOYS--Dunnison and the others wheel their horses around and ride to the rear--several hundred yards.

DURHAM
How come we always get to do this?

BERRY
'Cause you're the new Boys.

DUNNISON
What about you?

BERRY
'Cause I'm little.

CLOSE MCNELLY--He raises his hand, halts the line.

MCNELLY
Proceed at the walk.

The order is passed down. The line advances.

MCNELLY (CONT'D)
At the lope!

They swing into an easy lope.

MCNELLY (CONT'D)
Shotguns!

They all pull their shotguns.

CLOSE THE BOYS--Dunnison and Durham start to pull their weapons.

BERRY
Whatta' you doing? You'd be shootin' our own--You damn fools!

They look sheepishly at each other choking in the dust.

CLOSE MCNELLY--He throws his hand forward.

MCNELLY
At the gallop!

They rush forward headlong--exhilarating if you're not riding the drag. The line is pretty ragged, but it is a line.

MCNELLY (CONT'D)
Fire!

The Rangers blast into the air ahead with one barrel and howl and charge.

CLOSE DUNNISON--OTHERS--RIDING--Being cloaked in choking dust. But already something is taking place. The old combination of misery, discipline and youth is beginning to work.

RUDD--Demonstrating the pleating of the horse's mane into a large strong loop. Rangers look on.

OLD FRANK--Swings up into the saddle.

CLOSE OLD FRANK--Galloping at full speed, he swings off the side of the horse and thrusts his shotgun around the horse's neck.

OTHERS--Watch as he thunders by, fires and spatters a barrel.

CLOSE OLD FRANK--RIDING--He swings over the other side so that he's looking backwards, thumbs back the hammer--and blasts.

CUT TO:

DUSK--CAMP--Everyone sitting around eating. Scipio walks over from the wagon.

SCIPIO
Payday gentlemen--We is soon entering bandit country so the State of Texas is advancing you all twenty five dollars.

Everyone jumps up--stands in line.

SCIPIO (CONT'D)
If you got a family which most of you don't--I'll help you send this on home.

DURHAM
Why's that?

SCIPIO
'Cause you may not live to git another, Georgia.

CUT TO:

CAMPFIRES--Everyone about to turn in. Old Frank reads a thick heavy book in the light of a lantern.

DUNNISON
That's a big book.

OLD FRANK
Yep--heavy too.

DUNNISON
What is it?

OLD FRANK
Les Miserables--Victor Hugo--you ever read him?

DUNNISON
No but I speak French.

OLD FRANK
That an' a dime won't buy you a dinner.

He goes back to reading.

A MEXICAN RANGER named SANTOS takes out a deck of cards. He shuffles them crudely. The sound turns Dunnison's head. Durham looks up too.

DURHAM
Well now look at that.

SANTOS
You know how to play Georgia?

DURHAM
Does a hound dog get ticks? What about you Lincoln?

DUNNISON
He looks pretty good at it. I don't know--I'm still using a rope for a belt.

He looks at the rope that has replaced his fine money belt.

SANTOS
Well you got paid Amigo--you're rich.

CLOSE DUNNISON--He looks as innocent as a lamb.

DUNNISON.
If you say so.

DISSOLVE TO:

THE FIRE--Now just little more than coals, the players in silhouette--Dunnison leans forward, takes some money, tightens the silver conchoed belt that Santos was wearing.

DURHAM (depressed)
That's all Lincoln--
(shivers)
It's damn cold--an' I was fixin' to get a new coat.

(CONTINUED)

SANTOS
How come you learn so fast Compadre?

DUNNISON
Just luck I suppose. You want to try again?

SANTOS
I got to save what I got left.

DUNNISON
How 'bout that hat?

SANTOS
A man needs a sombrero in country like this.

DARK JESUS

DAY--COMPANY--Riding towards the rising sun. In the distance is a wisp of dust. Dunnison is wearing Santos' fine sombrero, his silver belt and spurs. Santos is wearing Dunnison's previous hat and rope-for-a-belt. His pistol hangs in a holster across his saddle. Durham and Berry follow behind.

BERRY
Somehow I just don't think it was fair. I ain't saying Honest Abe would cheat, but it just weren't fair.

DURHAM (looks up)
Riders.

CUT TO:

CLOSE MCNELLY--He puts his field glasses up. Armstrong rides up at his side--a Henry repeating rifle at the ready.

MCNELLY
Sandoval--

DUST--Materializes into a RIDER leading two horses. The rider moves with an effortless grace, and his fine horse seems to be as light as a greyhound. He rides up to the Rangers who have halted and spread to the flanks as in their practice. The rider halts knowing this is not a friendly formation, and proceeds at a walk. His horse is spirited and prances deftly, but always in control. The rider is dressed in Vaquero finery--a broad brocaded sombrero--tight breeches and fine leather boots. He wears an ivory gripped Colt single action, and a new Model '73 Winchester lays across a filigreed saddle. A colorful scarf sets off a dashing dark handsome face. He is the image of the Caballero, but he is more--his name is JESUS SANDOVAL, and a darkness and mystery hang over him.

(CONTINUED)

CLOSE BERRY--He looks and turns to the Boys.

BERRY
That's Sandoval--Old Casoose!

SANTOS
It is!

Sandoval takes his sombrero off and bows with a flourish. The dust clearing behind him reveals--two horses--one with a DEAD MAN across the saddle.

SANDOVAL
For you Jefe--

CUT TO:

CROSS--Stuck on a newly dug grave. The Company rides past.

DINNER--TWILIGHT--DURHAM--Sits down with the others admiring his full plate. He is about to eat when Old Frank walks up with Sandoval.

OLD FRANK
Alright Boys--Jesus Sandoval--Cap'n wants him to head up your dab. That means you do whatever he says an' make sure his horses are fed and groomed and his weapons cleaned.

They are taken by surprise. They're still kids, especially Berry. The man has a disturbing presence. He seems to move ahead of his shadow. He hands his horse's reins to Berry. The animal is a blooded stallion, black, and clearly superior to any in the Outfit. His secondary mount is nothing to sneeze at either. He goes over to get his food from Scipio. The Rangers all seem to make way for him. He smiles graciously, his dark skin set off by flashing white teeth. The Boys look at each other. Durham wolfs down his food. Old Frank seems amused.

BERRY
He's a killer--

DUNNISON
An outlaw?

BERRY
Way I heared it--was more than that--Sh-h-h-h--

Sandoval comes back--sits down with the Boys--starts chewing on a beef rib.

SANDOVAL
Hey--this man can cook eh?

They don't know what to say.

SANDOVAL (CONT'D) (to Durham)
What is a' matter Kid--the cat he's got your tongue?

DURHAM
I hear you're a killer.

Silence. Sandoval chews on his rib, smiles.

OLD FRANK
Well now, none of us are perfect, are we.

He drinks some coffee.

SANDOVAL
Do any of you Boys know how to play--cards?

DURHAM, BERRY, DUNNISON
Nope. Nope. Nope.

Sandoval shakes his head.

CUT TO:

MORNING--SANDOVAL--Gets on his horse with Berry holding it. He smiles, and wheels around his concho belt flashing with his silver holster on it. Dunnison cinches up a rope around his waist. They mount and follow.

CUT TO:

SANDOVAL--MCNELLY--Ahead of the others riding silhouetted against the sky.

BERRY
They say his family was killed by General Cortinas--a wife and a little girl. They done more than kill 'em too.

Sandoval waves his hat at McNelly and gallops off towards the horizon.

CLOSE THE BOYS--Riding in the dust watching.

BERRY (CONT'D)
He went all Hell bent. Killin' in the night--over there and over here. Some say it's revenge--

McNelly stops--starts to cough and slumps forward in his saddle. Rudd and Armstrong ride out to him.

BERRY (CONT'D)
Some say he just likes it.

(CONTINUED)

The coughing carries back on the wind to them.

CUT TO:

JORNADO DEL MUERTA

RIVER--Meandering through a dusty valley. Cottonwood trees live on its edges. The trees range in color from a dull yellow to deep vibrant oranges--a sharp contrast to the dull colored bleak landscape. The Company picks its way along the bank, the men are silent and the rush of the leaves in the wind cover all but the breathing of the horses.

EMPTY HOVELS--Abandoned corrals--a dead skeletal cow. As if all at once the people had decided to leave.

CORPORAL RUDD--Rides back from the point waving. He talks to McNelly--the Boys wait.

RUDD
Column of twos--Forward--

They gallop ahead.

CUT TO:

A SHADED GLEN--The light dancing about through the rustling orange leaves. Everywhere is the strange dichotomy of autumn bright color and the sadness of decay. A cool breeze blows up a cloud of leaves as the Company rides down towards Armstrong, who sits his horse below a HANGED FAMILY. The bodies, Mexican, a MAN, his WIFE, and SON turn gracefully in the breeze and bump into one another. The burned out shell of their house and horse pens lay off by the stream. McNelly halts the column.

MCNELLY
Burial detail--Cut 'em down.

ARMSTRONG
Banditos Mexicanos?

MCNELLY
Banditos Americanos--They don't hang their own--Got no boots on--These was poor white trash that did this.

ARMSTRONG
They drove off maybe twenty head of cattle--went due South toward the River--bold as brass. Sandoval's following 'em.

Some of the Rangers are taking the bodies down. They are stiff as boards and it makes the Boys queasy.

(CONTINUED)

MCNELLY
Get your hand in there Lincoln--You too good to handle the dead?

DUNNISON
No Sir--I mean Yes Sir I'll get to it.

He does with some reticence, which McNelly notices.

MCNELLY (yelling)
Now all you take a good look. This was just plain folk like yourselves. Didn't ever harm no one--just worked hard. Had a nice place here. There's pumpkin over there ready to pick. But there ain't no one to pick 'em. You remember that. Them that did this think they are higher than the Law. They laughed when they done this. You remember that too.

CUT TO:

NIGHT--THE COLUMN--Pushing on through the autumn moonlight. It's cold and their breath plumes about them. They lurch and start, sleeping in the saddle. Durham falls off. Berry holds his horse and Dunnison helps him back on--all under the steely gaze of Scipio. They push on--

DUNNISON
This is a journey of the Dead.

DURHAM
What's that?

DUNNISON
Nothing--Hey you think we'll catch those Bandits?

DURHAM
I hope so.

DUNNISON
I don't.

DURHAM
Well--I ain't so anxious that I'd feel I missed something. --You thinkin' a' running?

DUNNISON
Yes, --and you?

DURHAM
Yep.

DUNNISON
I'll go if you go.

(CONTINUED)

DURHAM
Same here.

Neither one will make a move so they plod on.

CUT TO:

THE LORD'S WORK

DAWN--THE COMPANY--Drawn up, men dismounted in an arroyo. A horse is heard and suddenly Sandoval dashes up over the edge of the ravine like a great hawk. He slides his horse down to them and dismounts in a cloud of dust.

MCNELLY
How many?

SANDOVAL
Six.

MCNELLY (to Armstrong)
Pick eight men--good ones.

ARMSTRONG
But we could surround 'em with the Company Sir--they'd give up.

MCNELLY
I don't want them to give up. I want those that survive to know how we do things.

ARMSTRONG
Yes Sir--

MCNELLY
Take the new Boys too--to hold the horses. Good that they see it too.

Armstrong calls off names at random, among them Durham and Dunnison.

CLOSE DURHAM--He gasps, looks at Dunnison--too late.

CUT TO:

DAWN--PRAIRIE--Light coming up. Durham, Dunnison and Berry hold the horses behind some flat rocks. Directly below them is a campfire--cattle wander about near some tied horses. Suddenly hooves can be heard--a wisp of dust by the sun. The cattle stir--some trot away bawling. Voices can be faintly heard but the wind is wrong to understand them.

CLOSE--FIRE--THE MEN--Jump to their feet--ONE is holding a coffee pot and pulls his gun with his other hand. He still hangs on to the coffee pot.

OUTLAW
Injuns! Comanch!

OTHER
There--

They see the dust swirl by the cattle. Suddenly men stand up from the sagebrush close by their left. One is Armstrong, another is Rudd.

ARMSTRONG
Drop 'em! We're Rangers!

The man with the coffee pot fires twice at Armstrong, who coolly raises his Winchester and shoots him through the mouth. He kicks about spastically dropping the coffee, but fires his gun again before flopping on the ground. Armstrong levers another round and shoots a MAN in his bedroll. The man stands up at the shot and Rudd's shotgun blows a cloud of dust through him. TWO more throw up their hands screaming.

MAN
Don't shoot! Don't shoot!
I'm done!

OTHER MAN
I want none of it!

But somehow TWO OTHERS were already with their horses. ONE gets on bareback and ANOTHER has his saddled. They go separate directions--

CLOSE BOYS--They watch in horror and mounting excitement suddenly realizing that one of the horsemen is headed their way. Before they can react--McNelly flashes past--levels his shotgun. He rides headlong into the man like a jousting knight, blasts him once and then again as he goes by. It is plain by his skill that Captain McNelly has done this before. What's left of the man slides from the saddle, and the empty horse gallops by the two young men, spattered with blood. McNelly is gone in a cloud of dust towards the other rider who is quickly overhauled by Sandoval. The man throws himself from his horse, and gets on his knees holding up his hands as he is circled by McNelly and the darkly silhouetted Vaquero.

CUT TO:

THE DEAL

CAMP--MCNELLY'S TENT--McNELLY--Sits on his cot with a small jug and his ever present hankerchief. He coughs a bit--looks at the

three men before him. When he said they were poor white trash he was overestimating. These men are common criminals and that is always the lowest edge of society, but these don't even make that grade. Their hands are tied behind their backs, and they look past McNelly outside to Scipio who sharpens his cooking knives. McNelly takes a slug from the jug.

MCNELLY
You want a drink--Gentlemen?

They nod and look to Sandoval who stands to their side. Dunnison is present with his paper and pen.

MCNELLY (CONT'D)
You ain't drinkin' out a' my jug.

He pours some in a gourd and Sandoval puts it in front of an Outlaw's mouth. He tries to drink nervously and the whiskey spills.

MCNELLY (CONT'D)
That's enough--seems like he spilled your whiskey.

One of the Outlaws with a pocked face snarls at McNelly.

POCK FACE
You go to the Devil--cause I ain't in that book.

He nods at the book sitting next to McNelly.

MCNELLY
Oh that so--What's your name?

POCK FACE
Pete Marsele.

MCNELLY
How'd you like to keep your name out a' that book Pete?

PETE
Whatta' you mean?

He pats the volume.

MCNELLY
--Forever? Take a few head a' beef now and then--run 'em across to Las Cuevas--just don't hurt nobody and the Rangers'll see to it that you're left in peace.

DUNNISON
But these men are murderers Sir!

MCNELLY
Your daddy teach you to interrupt your elders?

DUNNISON
No Sir.

MCNELLY
Then I'll thank you to keep your mouth shut.

He turns to the others.

MCNELLY (CONT'D)
You could live like you been livin'. Sell your stock to King Fisher or Cortinas.

PETE
King'd know.

OTHER OUTLAW
What you thinkin' of Pete?

MCNELLY
He wouldn't know if you didn't tell him. Course three of you--one of you're bound to get tired of the others. Right Pete?

OTHER OUTLAW
Don't listen to him.

McNelly turns to the man.

MCNELLY
Seems like you're holding us up--

He motions outside.

MCNELLY (CONT'D)
Jesus!

CUT TO:

THE OUTLAW--On the back of a Sandoval's horse, a rope thrown over a tree and tied in a good noose around his neck. He looks strange on the fine mount with filigreed saddle. Sandoval motions and the other two are brought out to face him.

OTHER OUTLAW
They gonna' do this to you too--You dirty bastards--You're no better'n the Yankee nigger!

SANDOVAL
I bet you never had such a fine horse under you.

(CONTINUED)

He whistles--the horse runs out and the man swings, kicking with a horrible gagging yell. His hands spring and clinch and his whole body convulses. His pants stain as his bladder empties.

CUT TO:

DUNNISON--He stares at it--looks at Durham and Berry and suddenly realizes McNelly's behind him.

MCNELLY
Cut him down when he's through Lincoln--
and bury him.

He turns to the Others.

MCNELLY (CONTINUED)
What a' you say Pete--time to join
our merry band?

PETE
I say too bad for him.

OUTLAW
What a' you want?

He walks them into his tent. Their backs to us.

MCNELLY
I want to know when Fisher crosses
from Las Cuevas--when and where and
how many.

THE COMPANY--Heading out again in a column of twos. The Outlaws, free again, ride off to the South not looking back.

DISSOLVE TO:

NUECESTOWN

THE COMPANY--Lopes down the long grassy plain to a small settlement--sod huts and wood houses that seem naked on a long plateau. Behind them are small patches of green where fertile vegetable plots are tended. Donkeys, mules and dogs wander about loose in pastures. A few horses are seen. As they enter the village through adobe gates, the MEXICAN POPULATION swarm out and run before them like game, shouting and singing. LITTLE CHILDREN run by the side of Dunnison, Durham and Berry making them feel like conquerors.

DOORWAYS--The graceful forms of YOUNG MEXICAN GIRLS, whispering to each other.

WINDOW--DARK EYES--Inviting and dangerous flash from behind a lace mantilla.

CLOSE DUNNISON--He hasn't missed it, and if he was thinking of leaving the Ranger Company, perhaps his plans can wait a day or two.

NUECESTOWN GENERAL STORE--A large heavily built structure--more like a stockade than a store--raised above the dusty street, and made of large logs. On top of the structure is a tower-like construction where SEVERAL MEN watch with field glasses and rifles. As the Rangers ride up--TWO OLDER MEN step out onto the porch. One has a long black beard and the other uses a cane.

BEARDED MAN
You must be McNelly.

MCNELLY
I am Sir.

BEARDED MAN
Sol Liechtenstein--Thank the Lord for you Sir--
I run this store for Captain King. We'll send
someone to the Ranch for him now that you're here.

MCNELLY
We'll camp out on the flat a couple miles
so as not to disturb anyone.

LIECHTENSTEIN
You can stay on my porch if you want.
Lord, we are happy to see you. Let your
men come on inside. They could use a drink
and we've plenty of provision, whatever you
need--compliments of Captain King.

CLOSE DURHAM--He hears this, his frayed jacket conspicuously thin.

MCNELLY
Thank you Sir but my men are paid by the
State and they will buy their provision.

CUT TO:

STORE--Huge timbered hall with all manner of things hanging from the rafters. Scipio tends to the canned and dry goods. Dunnison selects a nice belt, and a thick Mexican serape. He looks at knives and pistols in a glass case. Durham just looks at the row of blanket coats and then at Dunnison. A SENORITA looks up from behind the case.

SENORITA
What can I do for you?

She's obviously taken with Dunnison.

DUNNISON
I'd like to see that new Colt cartridge
revolver. Have any other models?

SENORITA
Most of the guns are kept at the Ranch--
on a' kind of the bandits--safer that way.

DUNNISON
Well I guess I'm a lucky fellow.

He smiles.

DUNNISON (CONT'D)
I'll take it and let's see a leather
holster.

She smiles back.

SENORITA
Twelve dollars--

Scipio looks at Durham.

SCIPIO
What about you Boy? That garment
don't look like it'll hold you in.

DURHAM
I'm a farmer--I don't get cold.

SCIPIO
What--

DURHAM
I don't need nothin'.

He turns and walks away as Dunnison pays for the shiny new Colt.

CUT TO:

ANOTHER PART OF THE STORE--McNELLY AND SOL--Confer with the man with the cane and his DAUGHTER. The man is of strong frame, healthy, but somehow he looks shattered and cracked to the core.

LICHENSTIEN
Tom Noakes Cap'n.

NOAKES
Pleased to meet you Cap'n--we all been waitin'.
The Army's no damn good. They just sit on
Captain King's Ranch an' make up reasons--

MCNELLY
--Don't mean I can do much better Sir.

NOAKES
I come from Louisiana--I know'd what you
done in the War. Hell, you--you meant more
to us than General Lee.

MCNELLY
Where's that saddle Sol?

He takes them over to a brand new silver conchoed saddle.

NOAKES
It's a Dick Heye saddle--just like the ones they got. They hit me on Good Friday.

McNelly motions to Armstrong and Rudd.

MCNELLY
Get Dunnison over here.

Rudd grabs Dunnison.

MCNELLY (CONT'D)
Get your pen an' paper out Boy--

NOAKES
I had sixteen just like it--Same silver conchos--They burned my store and burned me.

LIECHTENSTEIN
A man quirted his wife Martha and--abused her.

Noakes sinks down into himself.

MCNELLY
Could you identify 'em?

NOAKES
No--they was sheeted up like night riders--'Cept I pulled the hood off the one that quirted Martha--Then they burned me with an iron.

MCNELLY (to Dunnison)
Sixteen Dick Heye saddles Boy--Get a good picture--length of the tapideros, conchos on the skirts. Get a good idea of what the man who quirted Mrs. Noakes looked like too.

McNelly just turns and walks out the back of the store. Dunnison starts to follow but sees him doubled over coughing. He fishes for his flask, fumbles for it. Dunnison rushes out and helps him. He takes a drink--it seems to slow the cough. He sits down on a barrel, his eyes catch Dunnison. He's embarrassed and angry--but there's something more. Then, the two of them look in the doorway which is filled with ONLOOKERS.

CUT TO:

EVENING--GRASSLANDS--THE COLUMN--Moves ahead--a storm builds in

the distance. McNelly lays in the back of the wagon with the canvas rolled up. Armstrong and Rudd ride at his side. Dunnison sits behind him, taking note.

MCNELLY
What'd he look like?

DUNNISON
A tall man with dirty leather colored hair and a red beard. Had a heavy deep scar, from his hairline to the point of his chin. Two pistols an' a flat brimmed sombrero--wide.

The Non-Coms take it in.

MCNELLY
He laid a quirt on the woman's face--marked her so bad she keeps it covered. Won't ever come out in the daylight when folks are around. --An about those Dick Heye saddles--

He pauses.

MCNELLY (CONT'D)
Describe 'em to the Rangers. Then order 'em to empty those saddles on sight. Leave the the trash that fall's out of 'em--an' bring the saddles back to camp.

DUNNISON
Suppose someone just bought one of 'em or won it in a card game?

MCNELLY
Then it was stolen goods or the game was crooked.

DUNNISON
Why there must be more than sixteen in this country.

MCNELLY
When we get about twenty I'll tell 'em to slow down. What is your stake in it anyway? Have you grown some kind of conscience for the rest of us?

DUNNISON
I just don't want innocent people--

MCNELLY
Boy--how many innocent people have you seen in this world--'specially between here and the Rio Bravo?

ARMSTRONG
Well I can see you're feeling better Cap'n.

RUDD
You're doing good Lincoln.

MCNELLY
Get me a horse--I don't cotton to lollygag with a do-gooder all day.

CUT TO:

THE KING RANCH

MORNING--As the Column gallops across the thick grass to the great gates of the Santa Gertrudis Ranch. The gates and fence around it are made of cut timber, as well as the huge main house, bunkhouse, and barn. On top of the main house, which is a square three stories, is a cone shaped tower on which ARMED MEN pace and look out over the horizon. As the Company rides in, they are flanked by SCOUT RIDERS from the Ranch who yell greetings in Spanish.

DUNNISON--DURHAM--BERRY--Ride bunched together.

DURHAM
You live around here don't you?

BERRY
My folks work on this ranch--the Santa Gertrudis, but I was born on El Sauz.

DUNNISON
All Captain King's?

BERRY
All his.

RIDING OUT to meet them is a TALL POWERFUL MAN with flowing silver hair and goatee beard. He rides a fine blooded stallion flanked by MEXICAN RIDERS with Winchesters. He hails McNelly and the two men seem quite happy to see one another.

BERRY (CONT'D)
--He was a riverboat Cap'n before the War--made himself a fortune. Since the end of the War nobody's had nothin' and Cap'n King took care of us.

(CONTINUED)

DURHAM
Your mamma and pap waitin' here?

BERRY
I sure hope so.

CLOSE KING--MCNELLY--They turn towards the big house--the Column following. King looks back across to the Rangers.

KING
They look so young Leander--badly mounted and so damn young.

MCNELLY
Young men fight without pondering much. Hell, they're a damn sight more seasoned than some boys I know who ran a few Yankee blockades.

King looks around.

KING
Some of those boys have gotten old-- Hell Leander, you were born old.

McNelly nods back at them.

MCNELLY
They're a good bunch--orphans mostly--

KING
--And a few on the run.

MCNELLY
--Little pepper never hurt the taste. Hardly none come from Texas--I don't like my Rangers having to worry about throwing down on their own kinfolk.

CUT TO:

MCNELLY--KING--THE NON-COMS--SOME OF KING'S GUARDS--Walk on the planked sidewalk of a huge out-building.

KING
--What about you Leander, you ain't gettin' any better.

MCNELLY
I'm still alive Richard. I cut my deal with the Devil.

KING
The Devil can be a liar.

They open a heavy set of stock doors.

MCNELLY
Then to Hell with him.

They walk into a long tack room filled with gun racks, saddles, bridles and ropes. There must be a hundred rifles and shotguns on the racks, and tens of unopened wooden cases on the floor.

MCNELLY (CONT'D)
I'll be go to heaven.

KING
I keep eighty men armed and riding at all times--'cept I'm never sure who's in cahoots with who.

MCNELLY
You think Fisher could take you?

KING
They got over 400 Banditos living out of Las Cuevas--They'll get me--the women, the children, the stock, sooner or later.

He walks forward, picks a cover off one of the stacked wooden cases--from which he withdraws a brand new Winchester '73 rifle.

KING
I got it all shipped in for you Leander, everything you need.

MCNELLY
The State of Texas ain't gonna' pay you back.

KING
Nobody ever gets paid back.

CUT TO:

THE RANGERS--Opening cases and removing small blue boxes--each one containing a Colt Single Action Army revolver with seven and one half inch barrels--all shiny blue and case colored--with varnished wooden grips. They are passed out to eager hands and wiped of their packing grease. Others clean the grease out of the bores of .45-.70 Sharps Business Rifles and Carbines. The Non-Coms lever new Winchester repeating carbines and everyone pushes shiny new cartridges into leather loops in belts.

MCNELLY (V.O.)
Each of you will get one Colt revolving pistol and a Sharps rifle.

KING (V.O.)
Don't you want repeaters?

MCNELLY (V.O.)
I want my Boys to shoot far and hit hard. A man's more careful when he has one shot. I can use all the breach loading shotguns you've got.

RANGERS--Are busily sawing off the barrels of shotguns to twenty four inches.

CUT TO:

CORRALS--THE BOYS--Look to their saddles and tack laying on the cut timbered fence. Scabbards are buckled on and old leather replaced. Others tend to the horses which are milling about. McNelly and King walk past--Durham, Dunnison, Berry and others follow. King walks up to another large corral.

KING
Cortez! Andale!

A VAQUERO rides a beautiful Palomino stallion up to them at a gallop, and slides to a dusty stop dismounting and holding the reins. Behind him follows Sandoval, smiling.

KING (CONT'D)
For you Leander.

MCNELLY
I could never afford a horse like this.

KING
Aw shut up--Jesus picked him out. If you don't ride him, maybe one of King Fisher's bandits will.

McNelly takes the reins awestruck.

MCNELLY
What's his name?

KING
Cajones.

McNelly smiles and swings up into the fine saddle. He seems to grow several feet.

CLOSE DURHAM--DUNNISON--Durham smiles as the Captain spins the mount around.

DURHAM
That's how my daddy must a' seen him.

DUNNISON
What?

DURHAM
That's what he looked like.

CUT TO:

A HUGE CORRAL--Filled with the most beautiful horses ever bred. All of them wearing the RUNNING W brand of what will become the greatest ranch in the world.

KING
Go get 'em Boys.

The Rangers leap over the fence, lariats uncoiling. Dust rises as they pick their mounts.

CLOSE BERRY--Drops a hoolihan around a fine paint.

CLOSE DUNNISON--Who's learned to throw a loop with the rest of them as he lassos a big sorrel.

CLOSE DURHAM--Totally lost--just a big strapping farm boy with a rope. He throws and misses--pulls it back. A big leather hand pats him on the shoulder. He turns and looks up at Richard King.

KING
You ain't much of a hand are you Boy?

DURHAM
I spent my life behind a plow.

KING
Give me that rope--I'll get you a good one.

He takes it and steps out into the dust. Durham just stares in dumfounded admiration. King spots a big black gelding and effortlessly snags him.

KING (CONT'D)
He's yours now.

A tear rolls down Durham's dirty cheek.

CUT TO:

CAROLINE

SITTING ROOM--With wood panels and brocade--McNelly, Scipio and Armstrong sit sipping after dinner coffee with King and his family. His WIFE, a trim dark haired woman, plays a grand piano and sings. His TWO NIECES sit nearby with several well dressed MEXICAN LADIES and their HUSBANDS.

OUTSIDE--On the porch sitting rigidly with rifles are Corporal Rudd, Dunnison and Durham. Durham points and sees in the gas light Berry and his MOTHER and FATHER walking away. They look at him and keep holding their hands out to see how tall he has grown. Finally, Berry stands back to back with his father while his mother compares them. A LITTLE BROTHER and SISTER tag along. Both boys watch and feel homesick.

(CONTINUED)

DUNNISON
How much longer do we have.

RUDD
Your watch is three hours--you're not half finished.

CUT TO:

MCNELLY--Sitting in a comfortable chair, in a dark coat. He looks handsome and younger. He coughs suddenly and pulls the hankerchief. Mrs. King stops singing and his racking cough bends him over momentarily.

MCNELLY
It's alright--you can go on Henrietta.

HENRIETTA
You're much worse Leander. Why don't you admit it? Stay here and let us cook for you.

She looks at Scipio.

MCNELLY
Scipio'd never stand for that Ma'am.

He pauses and looks at them, the surroundings, the warm fire.

MCNELLY (CONT'D)
I'd like to--
(looks down)
--but I haven't got the time--My men could probably use some coffee.

HENRIETTA
Caroline, Suzanne--be so kind--

CUT TO:

COFFEE--CREAM--In a china pot and service being brought out to the Boys. The two young girls are very attractive, vital and embarrassed. CAROLINE, the oldest at seventeen leans down to pour Durham's cup and their eyes meet. Durham is transfixed--for him it is absolute and true love. He's never seen a girl as graceful and well shaped. Dunnison notices too, but Caroline stares right back at Durham. Something chemical or whatever takes place.

CAROLINE
Is that enough?

His cup is sloshing full.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)
Cream and some brown sugar?

DURHAM
I've never had it.

CAROLINE
I'm sure you'll like it.

She puts it in, stirs it. He sips--burns himself.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)
It's hot.

DURHAM
I've never tasted anything so sweet.

CAROLINE
What about you?

Dunnison is quite amused by the whole thing. He smiles his best smile at the other King niece.

DUNNISON
Oh I'm just fine.

CUT TO:

MRS. KING--Singing "Lorena"--A sad haunting beauty to it makes them all realize that here and now is a place, a point in time, they can never return to.

CUT TO:

EMPTY COFFEE CUP--In Durham's hand, his head craned around watching the girls. Caroline sneaks a glance at him. He waves the cup smiling.

DUNNISON
That's three--you'll never get to sleep.

Caroline gets up, and with her sister brings the tray.

RUDD
Well--I guess we can change watch early seeing how it's been a long day.

DURHAM
Like Lincoln said--I ain't ever gonna get to sleep. Why I could drink this coffee all night.

The girls arrive with the tray.

CAROLINE
Hasn't he had enough?

DUNNISON
Miss he'll drink coffee til' he drowns if you'll pour it.

(CONTINUED)

Durham blushes--looks down.

CAROLINE
What's your name anyway?

Durham can hardly answer.

DURHAM
George--

DUNNISON
We call him Georgia Miss--and I'm Linc.

Durham looks up.

DURHAM
Linc--that's short for Lincoln, Ma'am. Lincoln's his name. He's trying to live it down.

CAROLINE
You two are a pair to draw to. I'm Caroline, and this is Suzanne, my sister. We're Captain King's nieces and we're awful happy--to have you--protect us.

RUDD
I think it's time for the next watch--Gentlemen, Ladies--

He stands up.

CUT TO:

MORNING--EARLIEST DAWN--The streaks of light revealing billowing distant thunderheads. Dunnison stirs and looks up. Durham stares off at the distant corrals sitting fully dressed on his bedroll.

DUNNISON
What're you doing?

DURHAM
Oh--watching the horses play in the ground fog

Indeed he is watching. Dunnison looks at them too--the beautiful animals running and snorting mist in the huge corrals.

DUNNISON
Couldn't sleep?

DURHAM
No.

(CONTINUED)

DUNNISON
We're gonna have to do something about this.

Durham isn't listening.

CUT TO:

THE BACK CORRALS--STILL MORNING--The dew fresh on everything--The smell and sounds of the Rangers taking breakfast drifts across the corrals. This corral is where all the old nags that the Boys have traded in are kept. Durham looks across the fence at Judy. The old plowhorse nuzzles him and seems to know this is farewell. Durham senses something and turns. Caroline is about ten feet away watching him. He is surprised but no longer embarrassed.

CAROLINE
I saw you out here alone--I thought I'd--is this your horse?

DURHAM
She ain't much to look at, but she an' I been friends for a long time.

Caroline comes up tentatively and pats her on the muzzle.

DURHAM (CONT'D)
I'm getting paid soon--an' if you'd ask Captain King--

CAROLINE
To take care of her? --I'll take care of her--as if she were my own.

Durham turns--now a little embarrassed, he unties his fancy new horse.

DURHAM
I--I really appreciate that Miss.

CAROLINE
Say no more on it Mr. Durham.

He swings up into the saddle, actually looking quite dashing. He salutes Judy who shakes her head--and he tips his hat towards Caroline.

DURHAM
Name's George Ma'am--Good Morning.

CAROLINE
Good Morning George.

He rides off and tries not to look back.

CUT TO:

MISSPENT CASES

BARRELS--Setting up against an embankment--once again adorned with hats of all descriptions.

RIDERS--Flash by and shotgun blasts rip up the staves--all the barrels are hit--some dead center, a few hats are blown off.

DUNNISON--Riding full speed shooting, carrying two shells in between his rein fingers.

DURHAM--Riding full tilt the same way, having just fired--snaps open the breach loader and shakes one empty out--grabs a stuck one in his teeth and pulls it free and loads with his rein hand.

GOURDS--Set at two hundred and three hundred yards, adorned with fancy Mexican ribbons.

THE LINE OF RANGERS--In classic prone and sitting target positions firing their heavy Sharps rifles.

WOOD AMMO CASES--Lined with foil being carried up the line with rope handles. The Boys grab handfuls of the big shiny cartridges.

GOURDS--Shattering with hits--dust kicking up around them.

CLOSE DURHAM--DUNNISON--Firing--Berry kneeling, watching.

DURHAM
Got it?

Berry nods no.

BERRY
That was just dust--You're too damn low.

DUNNISON
First he wants us to shoot 'em all up close--Now he wants us to shoot 'em far away--Then again, I'd rather they be far away.

DURHAM
I'd rather be far away myself.

DUNNISON
Yeah--I wonder where.

DURHAM
What of it--What if Captain King gives me a job?

(CONTINUED)

DUNNISON
Doing what--drinking coffee? Or rolling around in a haystack with Caroline.

DURHAM
You shut your mouth Lincoln.

DUNNISON
What would you know anyway. Here, have another cartridge.

Durham grabs it from him.

DUNNISON (CONT'D)
Aim high young man. Hell, the only way a fella like you can make your way in this world is to marry rich.

He fires, hits the gourd. Berry laughs.

DURHAM
Why you say that Lincoln?

DUNNISON
Linc--Because that's what my father said about me.

He fires.

THE BOYS LINED UP--At ease, their rifle butts on the ground. McNelly walks down the row.

MCNELLY
Until further orders, all prisoners will be put under the old Spanish Law--La Ley de Fuega.

Sandoval smiles.

MCNELLY (CONT'D)
Which means there will be no rescue attempts or interference.

CLOSE BOYS--Old Frank leans over to the Boys.

OLD FRANK (whispering)
Which means there will be no prisoners.

MCNELLY
Any questions?

A KID steps forward.

KID
Captain, this plans to be longer than I figured. I got some stock to look after back home.

MCNELLY
Draw your pay at the wagon.

Dunnison looks at Durham quickly--Durham pretends he doesn't notice.

MCNELLY (CONT'D)
--Don't walk up on a wounded man--Pay no attention to a white flag. By the same token you treat the law abiding folks with respect. Don't take their turkeys or hogs no matter how hungry you are. If a man's dog barks at you, you say you're sorry to disturb him.

DUNNISON
You say that to the dog?

MCNELLY
In your case Lincoln, yes.

He walks by.

MCNELLY (CONT'D)
I counted a lot of shots between you and Durham.

He turns back.

MCNELLY (CONT'D)
--And I didn't see no hits. But I could see your jaws wagging plenty. You must've had much to discuss concerning your marksmanship.

He walks by again.

MCNELLY (CONT'D)
Scipio--charge 'em for their ca'tridges--maybe they'll miss less often. Take it out of their pay.

Durham glares at Dunnison who shrugs.

DISSOLVE TO:

LES MISERABLES

MORNING--CAMP--Patrols(scouts) of four or five men leaving in different directions. Armstrong and Rudd give them final instructions in the distance while Durham watches, kneeling with some biscuits. In the foreground Dunnison plays cards with Old Frank and Sandoval. He is winning and has a stack of coins.

(CONTINUED)

DURHAM
Where they goin'?

OLD FRANK
On scouts--patrols--you know, lookin' for bandits.

DURHAM
How come we gotta' stay here?

OLD FRANK
'Cause he don't trust you.
(to Dunnison)
Hit me Son.

Durham picks up his book, "Les Miserables".

DURHAM
Yeah it is heavy--what's it about?

OLD FRANK (cold)
Put it down.

He does.

DURHAM
Sorry.

OLD FRANK (catching himself)
It's alright Son--The book's about a fella' who's on the run from the law.

DUNNISON
They catch him?

OLD FRANK
He keeps gettin' away.

DURHAM
How come the Cap'n don't trust us.

OLD FRANK
Hell I wouldn't either. One a' you's no good at nothin'--The other cheats at cards--an'
(to Berry)
You're too little.

DUNNISON
You think I'm cheating?

OLD FRANK
Hell Son, I know you are. I just can't figure out how.

DUNNISON
I could take that personal.

OLD FRANK (cold)
When you grow up you take it personal. Deal--

He has cold blue eyes and an authority that shuts Dunnison up. Durham wanders over towards the wagon. He hears coughing--sees Scipio go toward the wagon with a steaming pot of water.

DURHAM
Cap'n's sick.

DUNNISON
What else is new? Maybe he'll die-- he's gonna die sooner than later.

DURHAM
You just shut up! Don't you talk about the Cap'n like that!

DUNNISON (cynical)
What's your stake in it--have you grown a conscience for the rest of us?

DURHAM
Just keep your mouth shut Lincoln.

Dunnison shakes his head.

DUNNISON
Amazing what a woman'll do for a man.

Durham stands up, looks out.

OLD FRANK
Deal again Son--I want to watch how you do it.

They both look up as Santos and ANOTHER RANGER, a tall young man named GARTH, stop their chores and pick up rifles as TWO RIDERS approach. As the men approach, it is plain to see that they are not Rangers. One wears a flowing serape, and the other is PETE MARSELE, the old friend of McNelly's. They pull their horses up just out of pistol range.

MARSELE
We don't come seeking no trouble. Jest want to see Cap'n.

Old Frank steps forward.

OLD FRANK
C'mon in--Don't do nothin' fast.

They do, and dismount in front of McNelly's tent. Dunnison stands up when he notices the man with Marsele has a scar down his face--and a flat brimmed sombrero--and a red beard.

DUNNISON
That's the man that quirted Mrs. Noakes!

DURHAM
Hell, you don't know.

They are ushered into the tent by Scipio.

THE RANGERS--Seven or eight of them that are still in camp are standing around debating about the identity of the visitors when McNelly bursts out of the tent strapping on his pistols.

MCNELLY
Frank--You're acting Sergeant. Scipio give us two days dry rations--Full bandoliers and twenty rounds for revolving pistols. Santos--You ride to La Parra and get Sandoval and Rudd--
(to Scipio)
Armstrong's due in tonight--Tell him to meet us below Las Rucias.
(to the Others)
Tighten your cinches Boys--Let's get kicking!

RANGERS--They ride out at a fast lope covering the grassland at a relentless pace. McNelly seems suddenly charged with energy.

CLOSE--BOYS--They ride behind Old Frank. In the distance a mottled pattern of small clouds checkers the sky. McNelly and the two outlaws lead the way.

DURHAM
I don't like that Pete feller.

DUNNISON
The Captain knows what a man is.

DURHAM
Yeah--look at the way he treats us.

BERRY
Well we're riding with him so quit your bellyaching.

DUNNISON
Would'nt it be something if we were to get the first blood?

DURHAM
I thought you didn't cotton to having folks shoot at you.

DUNNISON
Long as they miss--it would be somethin'.

CUT TO:

WATER HOLE--DUSK--The country is sparsely pocked with mottes of tangled brush. The Rangers rest on a small rise overlooking marshlands and beyond--the sea. The horses drink the brackish water as do the men. It's getting dark. McNelly kneels down and looks out alone--the others tending to the horses and eating dry biscuits and jerky. McNelly picks up a fistfull of dirt and lets it drift on the wind direction. The sound of riders is heard. McNelly doesn't turn around as Sandoval, Rudd, Santos and eight others ride up at the gallop. Sandoval dismounts handing his horse over to Durham, and walks to McNelly followed by Rudd. The two outlaws look at Sandoval and step away from the Captain. He watches them and they move even further away.

RUDD
Cap'n--You alright?

MCNELLY
Yes--I'll be fine Corporal. Glad you could join me.

Sandoval looks up--the quilted pattern of clouds, little tufts of cotton cover the whole sky. The sun is setting in a band of purple.

SANDOVAL
Jefe--could be a Norther.

MCNELLY
I know.

SANDOVAL
You trust these Hombres?

MCNELLY
I have to.

RUDD
What do they say?

MCNELLY
Big party--went north along the beach--saw their tracks--twenty or thirty. It's a cattle raid up to Amargosa. They aim to come back along this side of the marsh.

SANDOVAL
What about them?

MCNELLY
They're gonna catch up with their compadres--I said we'd pick our targets--That's why they're dressed fancy.

RUDD
Why don't we keep one of 'em?

(CONTINUED)

MCNELLY
I gave my word.

Rudd looks down. Sandoval cleans his fingernails with a little bone handled knife.

MCNELLY (CONT'D)
You have any luck?

Sandoval shrugs and motions back to his Rangers. One carries a silver mounted Dick Heye saddle across his horse's withers.

MCNELLY (CONT'D)
Who did it?

RUDD (indicating Sandoval)
He did.

MCNELLY
What happened to the horse?

SANDOVAL
Eat him.

CUT TO:

THE OUTLAWS--Leaving a motte of low brush near the marsh. They ride quickly away to the north. It's almost dark and the Rangers are deployed along the tree-line, their horses behind them. A cold wind whips up the sandy soil.

CUT TO:

THE NORTHER

NIGHT--DURHAM--Tries to sleep with a meager blanket around him while Berry stands watch. Dunnison is well bundled up in his newly store bought coat and bedroll. Durham's blanket keeps blowing off, and his threadbare coat doesn't even go around him. He sits up holding his shivering arms.

DURHAM
What is it Berry--a blizzard? It was hot when we left.

BERRY
It's a Norther--comes all the way from Canada. Sometimes it snows or the like. I've seen cattle froze standing up.

This doesn't console Durham.

BERRY (CONT'D)
Should a' bought you a coat.

(CONTINUED)

DURHAM
What?

BERRY
I said you should a' bought you a coat in town.

DAY--BLEAK WIND DRIVEN SLEET--The sky is black and the distant gulf is scudded with whitecaps. The Rangers are still in their positions. They're now joined by Armstrong and his band. He walks along the line leading his spent mount. He is soaked and filthy.

DURHAM
Hey Sergeant--you bring any extra food with you?

ARMSTRONG
I was hoping YOU were thinking of that Durham.

He sees McNelly at the end of the line, squatting with his knees drawn up and covered with a soaked blanket like an Indian. He coughs softly to himself--behind him in the trees Sandoval waits like an owl.

ARMSTRONG (CONT'D)
Sergeant Armstrong Sir--I just rode in.

MCNELLY
All present?

ARMSTRONG
Yes Sir--
(pause)
Cap'n Sir?

McNelly looks up.

ARMSTRONG (CONT'D)
The Boys are cold and tired--maybe a fire in the trees--then they could put the embers under their blankets and wrap up like you are Sir.

McNelly doesn't look up.

MCNELLY
Embers'd go out--ground's too wet. 'Sides you'd have to make a fire big enough to burn in this wet.

He looks at him.

MCNELLY (CONT'D)
--an' they'd see that.

CUT TO:

NIGHT--MCNELLY--ALONE--Deliberately off on the flank, unprotected from the wind and sleet. Wrapped in his blanket like a stump, he looks down the coast--lightning flashes in the distance. Sandoval suddenly appears crouched next to him.

SANDOVAL
Maybe they don't come.

McNelly doesn't look up.

SANDOVAL (CONT'D)
Maybe they never come--Maybe Pete, he is a liar--

MCNELLY
I hate to think so--Why don't you find out--

Sandoval is gone like a shadow, disappearing. McNelly coughs into his blanket.

CUT TO:

THE BOYS--DUNNISON--Stands watch in his hat and poncho. Berry tries to sleep and Durham is just trying not to freeze.

DURHAM (to himself)
I can't do this much longer--can't do this--

DUNNISON
What?

He glares up at him.

DURHAM
If it wasn't for you I'd be warm now. I--I'd have me a coat. --Now you got the coat an' my money.

DUNNISON
You're the one that wanted to gamble.

DURHAM
It weren't fair.

DUNNISON
You calling me a cheat?

DURHAM
It weren't fair.

DUNNISON
Yeah--What're you going to do about it?

Durham lunges to his feet--fumbles for his belt.

(CONTINUED)

DURHAM
I'll show you--talk to me like--

Dunnison's Colt flashes out cocked--gleaming in the rain. Everyone freezes. Berry sits up. Armstrong, Santos and Frank stand up from their positions. Armstrong walks over.

BERRY
Put that gun down Linc. What the Hell?

DURHAM
You'd pull on me?

DUNNISON
You were going for the same.

ARMSTRONG
Ain't much of a fight see'n how you've got all the advantage.

DUNNISON
That's right--that's the way I fight with odds in my favor.

Armstrong walks up and without breaking stride kicks the gun from Dunnison's hand. It flies glittering sleekly into the night rain. They all watch it until they hear it splash in the mud.

ARMSTRONG
How you like the odds now Son?

Durham lunges at Dunnison and grabs him by the hair. Dunnison tries to box but is no match for a hardened farm hand. Durham is not only bigger but has spent his youth wrestling hogs. He beats the living hell out of Dunnison. It's not at all fair. Durham pummels him and mashes his face into the muddy ground. At one point it seems Dunnison might drown. The men cluster around. There's no cheering because it's no contest. Everyone also knows Dunnison had this coming--not just for what they know of him, but for what he is.

MCNELLY (O.S.)
What the hell's going on? Sergeant Armstrong break it up.

Armstrong pulls them apart. They look up and see McNelly.

MCNELLY (CONT'D) (weak)
Stand to Mister.

Durham stands up--Dunnison pulls himself to his knees.

MCNELLY (CONT'D)
What was all this about?

They can't answer.

ARMSTRONG
Answer the Cap'n Son.

DURHAM
--Pulled a gun on me.

MCNELLY
You do that Boy?

DUNNISON
I didn't mean it.

He staggers to his feet.

MCNELLY
Why'd you do that Boy?

DUNNISON
I don't know.

DURHAM
I'd be warm if he didn't take my money at cards. I'd have me a coat.

MCNELLY
Was it a fair game?

DUNNISON (shamed)
No.

MCNELLY
An' you took his money?

Dunnison almost breaks down.

DUNNISON
Hell Sir--this--this is the best friend I've got in this world.

He fumbles with his belt--pulls it off.

DUNNISON (CONT'D)
He can have all the money I got--Here George--I didn't mean--I didn't know.

DURHAM
Keep it Linc.

McNelly coughs and pulls himself up--steps over to them.

MCNELLY
You can't buy your way out of this--
Money don't count here.

DUNNISON
If he'd told me--

MCNELLY
He didn't tell you because he was too proud. Stupid proud. But he was proud of himself not his money. You don't know about that 'cause you grew up getting all the sleep you wanted and eating when you was hungry and resting when you're tired--and quitting when you got hurt.

He lets that sink in.

MCNELLY (CONT'D)
You think I've been hard on you but that's the way life is out here. You got someplace to go back to--We don't. Nobody's making them stay here in this. I'll pay 'em off like I'm gonna pay you off an' then you can go home an' tell 'em what it was like when you went out West. An' you'll lean on bein' a Texas Ranger the rest of your life.

Coughs.

MCNELLY (CONT'D)
You'll have plenty a' stories an' when you run out of 'em you'll make up new ones and soon you'll go to believing the crap you made up. But these Boys got nowhere to go--this is all there is Mister. These ARE the best friends we got in this world and you don't cheat 'em at cards, or watch 'em freeze or pull a gun on 'em. That's all I got to say--not that you'd care to listen--Now c'mon over to my horse an' I'll pay you off.

He staggers into the night. Everyone goes back to their posts. Dunnison drops the money belt and collapses. He's crying but he won't show it. Durham picks up the belt and drapes it on his shoulder. He looks up.

DURHAM
Go on Linc--Go talk to him--tell him you're sorry an' get back here--I wanta' get some sleep.

Dunnison can't believe it.

DUNNISON
You--you forgive me George--Berry?

DURHAM
Yeah--You're the best friend I ever had either. Now go talk to him.

CUT TO:

MCNELLY--Leaning against his dark horse. He doesn't look at Dunnison who's behind him.

DUNNISON
My father said I was no good for nothing--So I guess I've got nowhere to go--like the rest of you.

MCNELLY
You may die doing this Son.

DUNNISON
Just as long as it's not you that kills me.

MCNELLY
It might be--Now get out of here--I'm only doing this 'cause we're short of men--You understand?

DUNNISON
Yes Sir.

BETRAYAL

DAWN--Grey and streaked black moving across great slabs of breaking clouds. The wind whistles cold across the soaked and frozen ground. The sea is flecked with white and sparkles like molten silver. A dark horseman hurtles along the beach, the clipping of the hooves lost in the gusts. It is Sandoval riding for all he's worth.

A RANGER SENTRY--Frozen like a fencepole--Sandoval flashes past waving his hat. The boy is too cold to return the gesture.

CUT TO:

MCNELLY--Covered with blankets laying on the side of a dune. He is shivering uncontrollably and his face is pale. Armstrong and Rudd are beside him, but it is plain there is little they can do. Sandoval gallops up dismounting on the run and stands before them. Other Rangers--including Santos and Old Frank, rush up to hear what he has to say. McNelly looks at them and motions them away.

ARMSTRONG
Get away.

They back up.

CUT TO:

BERRY--DURHAM--Watching from their positions. Durham has Dunnison's good blanket around him while Dunnison leans against

(CONTINUED)

a stump in the mud, far from caring about the cold. They watch the men confer--McNelly orders something. Armstrong turns.

ARMSTRONG
McAllister--Santos--rig up a travois for the Cap'n--Some a' you others help 'em.

RUDD
The rest of you to horse and make ready. We will be taking leave of this place.

Everyone goes about the business of quickly breaking camp. Rifles are scabbarded, axes and shovels tied.

DURHAM
We was fooled little Berry. None a' this had to happen.

BERRY
Ain't we gonna boil up some coffee?

DURHAM
No rest for the wicked--

RUDD
With dispatch Gentlemen--With dispatch!

CUT TO:

THE COLUMN--Moving along the open prairie as fast as the Captain can travel.

CLOSE MCNELLY--He writhes, strapped to his travois in the wake of his horse. Rudd and Armstrong ride at his side. The sun breaks through the clouds.

CLOSE BOYS--DUNNISON--Rides slumped, not saying anything. Sandoval rides up to them.

DURHAM
We're headed due south to the river ain't we Casoose?

SANDOVAL
Si.

DUNNISON
We gonna have a fight?

Sandoval turns and looks him over.

SANDOVAL
I hope so.

(CONTINUED)

DUNNISON
I hope so too.
(pause)
How's the Cap'n?

Sandoval doesn't answer.

DUNNISON (CONT'D)
You blame me don't you?

SANDOVAL
I am disappointed Senor Lincoln--but perhaps you will prove me wrong. I always hope for the good in a man. And if I do not find it--then I look for a tree to hang him on.

A RIDER waves to the Column from the point.

RIDER
Dust! --Dust at the River--Rio Bravo ahead.

DURHAM
Dust! How can there be any dust left in the world.

SANDOVAL
Cattle! Andale!

He gallops off--following Armstrong and about fifteen others. The Boys rush headlong after them.

CUT TO:

RIDGE--Overlooking the Rio Grande. Sure enough there are cattle in the water--dust in the air. The day has suddenly grown hot and sticky. A herd of longhorns, maybe a hundred and fifty are being crossed by BANDIT WRANGLERS. They yell and wave their lariats trying to get the column in the water out onto the opposite bank. Over the ridge thunder the Rangers.

ARMSTRONG
Rifles!

The group as one draw their Sharps rifles as they come off the ridge and splatter through the shallows.

OPPOSITE BANK--THE BANDITS--MEXICAN AND AMERICAN--Jeer and hoot at the Rangers.

BANDIT
Hey too late Amigos!

OTHER BANDIT
Cabron! Putas! Cuiga su Madre!

(CONTINUED)

ANOTHER BANDIT
Piss on you Ranger! Too damn fucken bad for you!

STILL ANOTHER
Next time Ninos go cry to your mother.

CUT TO:

THE RANGERS--Halt at the river's edge--eager to charge across. Santos slips down the embankment.

ARMSTRONG
Santos! Hold where you are!

They endure the full force of the jeering and laughing.

RANGER
Let us cut into 'em Sir.

ARMSTRONG
Ain't suppose to fire--'less they fire on us--Ain't doing it.

A particularly OBNOXIOUS BANDIT makes the age old motion of the finger, howling and waiving his hat with his other hand.

ARMSTRONG (CONT'D)
Nope--No Sir!

Old Frank pulls his Business Rifle from its scabbard, thumbs back the heavy hammer.

BANDIT
Eat the shit of dogs Ranger! Putas!

Frank hands Armstrong the rifle. Armstrong takes it up to his shoulder.

ARMSTRONG
No--not me.

He squints through the vernier tang sight. Fires--a loud do-whump that startles the horses and echoes off the water. The bandit's hand flies off in a red spray. He screams and slumps from his saddle. Armstrong gives the rifle quickly back to Frank.

ARMSTRONG (CONT'D)
Did you hear a shot?

RUDD
No Sir.

He looks around.

RANGER
No Sir--not me--I didn't hear no shot.

ARMSTRONG
To the rear Boys--Column of twos.
Fine rifle Frank.

OLD FRANK
Thank you Sir.

ARMSTRONG
Casoose--Stay behind and see if you can pick something off.

SANDOVAL
Si Jefe--I'll need my dab with me.

Armstrong gives him a look.

ARMSTRONG
If you want 'em--Smith, Durham, Dunnison! Fall out with Casoose.

They pull out of the forming column, and as they ride over the rise with Sandoval, Dunnison looks back at the cattle and the now quiet and scarce wranglers on the other side.

LA LEY DE FUEGA

DUSK--PRAIRIE--A great sweep of land cut by numerous little arroyos that funnel down towards the Rio Grande. In the foreground sits Sandoval looking through field glasses. The Boys and horses are hidden below him in a brushed wallow.

DURHAM
How come we got to be out here with no food and it's gettin' cold again? How come it's always us?

SANDOVAL
You don't be careful and you're starting to sound like a grown up man.

DURHAM
The Cap'n was wrong an' we gotta pay.

SANDOVAL
Somebody got to pay--why not you? The Capitan, he trusted an old friend and he was wrong. So you gotta pay. Capitan McNelly, he already pays.

BERRY
Is the Cap'n gonna die?

SANDOVAL
Of course--everybody dies. But I don't think he will die until he is through with what he started, and that ain't yet.

He looks more intently.

DUNNISON
You see something?

SANDOVAL
Si.

He rushes up and looks though another old pair of glasses.

SANDOVAL (CONT'D)
Look up the sendero to the trees.

P.O.V. GLASSES--TWO HORSEMEN--Coming at a good pace.

CLOSE DUNNISON--He puts the glasses down--an electricity runs through them all.

DUNNISON
Two--coming right here.

SANDOVAL (shrugs)
Luck eh? Keep looking--could be more.

He slides down the wallow like a reptile, and effortlessly swings up on his horse. They follow clumsily as he waits, pulling his shiny Winchester '73 from it's scabbard.

CUT TO:

THE RIDERS--Going hell-bent for the river, hoping to cross before dark. They don't see the horsemen in the wallow until too late. Sandoval and the others rise suddenly to their side like vultures.

SANDOVAL
Alto Muchachos! Nostros son Los Rangers!

RIDER
Hell to you!

They whip their mounts. The Boys raise their rifles but Sandoval is quicker, two shots in rapid succession. The lead horse goes down. Berry and Dunnison fire, their big guns booming deep and flashing from the muzzle. The second rider pulls up sharply, hands in the air. Clouds of white drift back over the Rangers and all is suddenly quiet.

RIDER
Please don't shoot me! Please!

CUT TO:

THE PRISONERS--HANDS TIED--The Boys boost the second one onto the remaining horse. Sandoval watches silently. They pull their horses up to mount.

SANDOVAL
No-no--You must stay here--there could be more.

DURHAM
By ourselves?

SANDOVAL
You got to learn sometime Muchacho. I take them down by the river to talk.

There is a cold finality in his gaze. He turns gracefully and leads the horses off.

CUT TO:

DARK--The moon fresh from the storm illuminates a cold prairie. Durham, though wrapped in a blanket still shivers. Dunnison looks through the glasses.

DURHAM
How long since we 'et?

DUNNISON
Will you shut up--don't think about-- and don't talk about it.

BERRY
Cap'n says he don't respect nothin' that can't go two days without sleep or food-- man or horse.

DURHAM
That make it better?

Suddenly they hear a piercing scream, unearthly, utterly horrible.

DUNNISON
What was that--coyote?

They hear it again--longer.

BERRY
That's no coyote comin' from the river.

Durham gets up.

DURHAM
Casoose? Let's go!

CUT TO:

COTTONWOOD THICKET--By the river. The gentle sound of water is interrupted by ghastly screams. The Boys ride up over the bank and below them see:

SANDOVAL--Who has tied one of the men's feet to a cottonwood--at the same time putting a noose around his head and tying it off on his horse. The other man lays in the moonlight with his head beside him. Sandoval urges his horse forward slowly, his smile leering in the darkness. When he sees the Boys--the man screams.

CLOSE SANDOVAL--He whips his horse who lunges ahead cutting off the scream. He whistles and his horse comes back.

CLOSE DUNNISON--DURHAM--HORRIFIED.

DUNNISON
Why--why'd you do that?

SANDOVAL
Why?--Why for revenge por Dios mio!

## PART II

"And when we reached the Prairie,
Our Captain gave command
'To Arms, To Arms' he shouted,
'And by your horses stand.'
I saw the Bandits comin'.
Their bullets 'round me flew.
And all my strength had left me,
And all my courage too.

We fought for nine hours fully
Before the strife was over.
The likes of dead and wounded
I never seen before.
And when the fight was over,
Los Banditos, they had fled.
We loaded up our rifles
And we counted up our dead."

THE TEXAS RANGER

A song of the 1870's

EGGS--Ten of them frying in a big iron skillet. Next to that are thick rashers of bacon and strips of beef on an iron griddle over hot coals. Beyond are biscuits, piles of thick steaming flapjacks and cauldrons of gravy and coffee. Many hands tend to these fixings but they are all presided over by great Scipio who stands in the early dawn light with a ridiculous soiled French chef's hat. The chuck wagon Rangers include Old Frank, Rudd and Sandoval. All the other hands have filled their tin plates once, and some are in line again.

SCIPIO
I shore do like to see a growin' boy eat.

CLOSE DURHAM--He is extremely concentrated, working a stack of flapjacks and molasses down to reasonable size.

SCIPIO (O.S.)
Eggs--fresh and crispy--bacon or beef.

DURHAM (mouth full)
Berry--would you get me some--

He proffers up a second tin plate.

DUNNISON
You haven't finished what you've got.

DURHAM
They'll be gone 'fore I'm finished.

BERRY
Ain't you full?
(belches)

DUNNISON
I have not begun to eat.

DURHAM
Just get 'em--they won't complain about you.

CUT TO:

MONTAGE--THE RANGERS--Calling out for their horses--the lariats spinning in slow motion--the dust--the hooves--leather stirrups--cinches tightened--rounds slipped into leather cartridge belts--canteens filled with hot coffee--men in groups and dabs heading out on scouts--the sun up in broken clouds--The Ranger camp--almost empty.

CLOSE DUNNISON--Scrubbing pots and skillets. Durham chops wood and Berry digs a latrine. Scipio walks over from McNelly's tent with a tray of cups and plates.

(CONTINUED)

DUNNISON
Cap'n better?

SCIPIO
What's you care for?

DUNNISON
Just wanted to know--Hope so.

SCIPIO
That's his business--Now come on in here.

The others draw in close.

SCIPIO (CONT'D)
Your job is to take the remuda out to pasture at sundown or when the Boys come in from scout. You get up before daybreak an' round 'em up so they's fresh when we sort 'em after breakfast.

DURHAM
Don't we get to go on no scouts?

SCIPIO
You complaining Son? --I can find some other thing around here for you to do.

DURHAM
What if--Casoose--needs us?

SCIPIO
That'll be the day hell done froze up. But if that happens you be sure and let me know.

He turns and stalks off to the tent--stops and turns.

SCIPIO (CONT'D) (to all of them)
Cap'n tends to admire them that claws an' scrapes for their dignity. He don't show much for someone who spends his time throwing it away. Cap'n also holds no truck with a man or horse that can't go three days without food or rest.

He turns and leaves.

DUNNISON
Where have I heard that before?

DURHAM
Why me?

BERRY (nods at Dunnison)
Cause you're with him--I'm just in it cause I'm little.

CUT TO:

NIGHT--THE BOYS ASLEEP--DURHAM--Snoring loudly. The campfires are burned down low, a lantern hangs on a wagon, another near McNelly's tent. Footsteps are heard. Boots come into view and stop next to Durham's head. The boot kicks him in the butt--he snorts half conscious.

VOICE
Get up--time to get goin'. Them horses is spread all over yonder.

The boots walk away. Durham stirs, curses and opens his eyes. No one else is up. He looks up in the sky--a myriad of stars. He nudges Dunnison and Berry.

DURHAM
C'mon you lazy hounds. There's a man's work to do.

CUT TO:

THE THREE--Riding serenely under the vast canopy of the brightly lit sky--a half moon high above.

BERRY (singing)
"From this valley they say
You are going.
I will miss your bright eyes
an' sweet smile.
For they say you're taking the sunshine--
That has brightened our paths for awhile."

His voice is clear, true and sad--and carries off over the endless steppes. Each one is made homesick because they are still boys.

ALL
"Come sit by my side if you love me.
Do not hasten to bid me adieu.
Just remember the Red River Valley,
And the Ranger who loved you so true."

DURHAM
Look at that moon--You can see the man laughing at us.

DUNNISON
Wait a minute here.

He pulls his mount up.

DUNNISON (CONT'D)
That moon shouldn't be up there.

BERRY
Why don't we arrest it and find a tree.

(CONTINUED)

DUNNISON
The moon'd be long down if it was near dawn.

They look at him.

DURHAM
You mean--

BERRY
It's the middle of the night.

DUNNISON
Not even midnight. Some son of a bitch woke us up. Why?

DURHAM
'Cause they don't like you Linc.

DUNNISON
I'm sorry Boys.

DURHAM
So am I 'cause I was dreaming of Caroline's eyes.

DUNNISON
That's not all you were dreaming about.

DURHAM
Well I wouldn't tell you. So what now--Here we are.

DUNNISON
I know just what to do.

CUT TO:

NUECESTOWN--NIGHT--Only a few buildings have lights in them but one is a Cantina! The Boys ride up smartly.

CUT TO:

MAMACITA--Standing next to a makeshift bar--a YOUNG SENORITA with a lascivious but innocent smile.

MAMACITA
Es la Chica buena, no?

DUNNISON
Su es buena.

MAMACITA
Mas?

DUNNISON
Si Mamacita mas. This'll fix you right up George.

MAMACITA
Tequilla--Pulce?

DUNNISON
Yep--sure--plenty.

She smiles, points to Berry.

MAMACITA
Por la Nino?

DUNNISON
Goes double for him.

CUT TO:

BERRY--HANGING--From the beam of a small adobe room, swinging like an ape making Mexican yells. Aye-Ye-Ye-Carumba! Below him are TWO YOUNG SENORITAS, very attractive with peasant blouses pulled down across little breasts and no skirts on.

CUT TO:

DURHAM--Making passionate love to a lithe raven haired TEMPTRESS. She claws at him gasping in rising excitement but he is soon done. Spent. Finished. She gasps something in his ear.

DURHAM
Again--alright alright--just hold your horses.

CUT TO:

DUNNISON--Who sits propped up in bed smoking a long Spanish cigar. A BEAUTIFUL GIRL sleeps on his chest while ANOTHER wrapped in a blanket plays a guitar at his feet and gazes deeply at him with dark sad eyes. She plays Red River Valley and she sings softly in Spanish.

DUNNISON
"Come and sit by my side if you love me."

CLOSE DURHAN--In the dark of his room.

DURHAM
"Do not hasten to bid me adieu."

CLOSE BERRY.

(CONTINUED)

BERRY
"Just remember the Red River Valley."

CLOSE DUNNISON--Hearing the others.

DUNNISON
"And the Ranger who loved you so true."

His eyes close. The girl blows out the lantern.

CUT TO:

THE STREAK OF DAWN--Far to the east, the stars still out. Roosters cry. A dog barks.

CUT TO:

DUNNISON--Asleep wrapped in Senoritas. Suddenly the door swings open creaking--light pours in. Dunnison wakes with a start--gasps--a FIGURE, dark, in sombrero, bandolieros, and Mexican boots stands ominous in the doorway. Dunnison rolls for his guns--stops.

FIGURE
You going to try that on me?

The figure is Sandoval.

SANDOVAL
Por favor Senoritas.

They scamper out of the room in their blankets.

DUNNISON
Oh my God it's morning! How'd you?

SANDOVAL
You can never go where I cannot find you Senor Lincoln. Now Andale! Pronto!

CUT TO:

SANDOVAL--THE BOYS--Riding at a good lope.

SANDOVAL
I come in to see the Capitan with such good news. Many Banditos and he say "Make ready"--"To horse" and I think I better go find my dab eh?

DUNNISON
Does he know?

SANDOVAL
If he knew he would kill you and I am getting to like you better. I can lie as good a Gringo, Senor Lincoln.

(CONTINUED)

He looks at Durham.

SANDOVAL
What about you Compadre? I thought you were in love.

DURHAM
I still am.

DUNNISON
It's important for George to be worldly--Eh--experienced.

SANDOVAL
Experience--that is something you will never have enough of. Andale.

They break into a run as the dawn comes up on another gathering storm.

CUT TO:

PALO VERDE

A DISTANT TORNADO--It's dark funnel dropping down from basalt clouds. The wind whistles and whines across the tufts of grass and clumps of brush. In the far distance are the marshes and seas.

CLOSE MCNELLY--Watching the twister as he canters along on Cajones, as black as the clouds. The wind whips at his hat with flecks of rain. His face is hardened with resolve but it still cannot hide an inner sadness. He wears a dark suit of clothes, a tie, and vest under a black cape. Behind ride fifteen Rangers including the Boys, Sandoval and Old Frank. They crest a small ridge and before them in the distance can be seen a line of cattle on the far side of a marsh. McNelly holds his hand up. Armstrong rides up alongside. The cattle are being escorted by a LARGE PARTY OF RIDERS--many more than needed.

MCNELLY
How many you reckon?

ARMSTRONG
Twenty--thirty--maybe more.

As he speaks, the riders fan out and scatter the cattle with distant gun shots.

CLOSE SANDOVAL--BOYS--They watch the whole thing with great apprehension.

DUNNISON
They're letting 'em run wild.

(CONTINUED)

DURHAM
They don't care--that's why they was so easy to catch.

DUNNISON
You mean they want to be caught?

SANDOVAL
Maybe it's us Compadres who are the ones to get caught.

He pulls his shotgun out and opens it.

SANDOVAL (CONT'D)
Makes no matter.

He plunks two Ten Gauge shells in and shoves it back in the scabbard.

SANDOVAL (CONT'D) (to Durham)
Hey--this is a fine day eh--First you know a woman's love--now this. I hope you live through it Amigo.

RUDD
Single file--five yard intervals!

CUT TO:

THE TWO COLUMNS--Separated by a stretch of prairie and marsh of about half a mile. They move along at an anxious trot. Finally the bandits come upon some low brush thickets that border the edge of the marsh. They spread out and dismount amongst these. Behind them is open prairie. The wind blows black clouds by. The sky is turbulent, ready to spawn another funnel.

CLOSE MCNELLY--He turns his stallion and stops. The column pulls in next to him.

MCNELLY
Pull it up tight--

The wind whips across but his voice carries easily across them.

RUDD
Pull in Lads--

MCNELLY
Alright Boys--Them over there's King Fisher's finest Bravos. They're waitin' for us with rifles and they got us outnumbered two to one. If we run and get the rest of the Company--they'll tell it all the way to El Paso. They think they're better than the Law and right now they're laughing it up something good.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MCNELLY (CONT'D)
Just remember this Boys--a little man can beat a big man--if the little fella's in the right and he keeps on 'a comin.

He opens a tin box and takes out a round badge of a lone star.

MCNELLY (CONT'D)
Pass it down--

Rudd and Armstrong pass the box down the line.

CLOSE BADGE--Silver with the words Texas Ranger on the edge.

MCNELLY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Made from a silver peso. Pin 'em on.

CLOSE DUNNISON--Pins his on--his hands trembling.

CLOSE DURHAM--Finishes pinning his and looks at it--shiny and bright over his heart.

CLOSE BERRY--Grits his teeth--checks his hat.

MCNELLY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Now just do what you're told and we'll come out a' this. This is the Lord's work so let's get it done. Battle intervals!

RUDD
Battle intervals!

The men wheel and ride back turning at five yard intervals towards the enemy.

THE COLUMN--Facing ahead--the horses snorting--the wind blowing-hats held on by stampede cords.

MCNELLY
At the walk--Forward--

RUDD
Forward!

They move towards the marsh as one.

CLOSE MCNELLY--He looks down the line of pale nervous boys. This is the worst part. They enter the marsh--about six inches deep but firm. The water splashes and is carried on the raging wind. About a quarter mile separates them from the brush. They push on.

CLOSE DUNNISON--He looks to Durham--who looks back at him. The look is abject fear, it says let's run. Durham bites his lip, the horses splash on, now it's hard to hold them back.

CUT TO:

BANDITS--Crouched in the brush--their horses tied behind them. Across the marsh the Rangers come--a sure advance, steady as the tide.

BANDITO
C'mon Ninos! Come to me Amigos.

The others are quiet--for some reason this is not a time to boast. Several lever the brass framed Winchesters and Henrys.

CUT TO:

MCNELLY--He draws his pistol--opens the loading gate and slips in the sixth round--snaps it shut and looks down the line.

MCNELLY
Draw rifles!

RUDD
Rifles!

They do--the heavy Sharps rifles wheeling up catching glints.

MCNELLY
At the trot!

RUDD
Trot!

The horses prance forward--splashing, the men standing in the saddle.

CLOSE--THUMBS ON HAMMERS.

CLOSE OLD FRANK--He puts the reins in his teeth and has a pistol in his other hand.

CUT TO:

BANDITS--They stare tensely--the Rangers now about two hundred yards away and coming on. Wind whips across them. A BANDIT fires.

CLOSE DUNNISON--His mouth opens--a bullet rips through the wind above his head. Muffled pops are on the wind. Water kicks up. He looks to Durham. Durham's face is white with panic. Bullets rip by.

MCNELLY
At the lope!

RUDD
Lope!

(CONTINUED)

They increase to a canter--water spouts up--the firing pops increase like sudden rain. Berry rides straight ahead his eyes closed. Sandoval urges his mount expertly his rifle at the ready. Bullets whiz by thick like a swarm of bees.

CLOSE DURHAM--He sees the puffs of smoke obscuring the brush. Rain splashes him in the face. A bullet takes off his hat. He looks around for it wishing he could follow it, but the horses plunge on with a will of their own.

CUT TO:

BANDITS--Firing as fast as they can but the Rangers are coming on--A hundred yards, seventy five. Men scream and break for their horses. Others fire and reload.

BANDIT
Diablos Tejanos! Putas!

CUT TO:

CLOSE MCNELLY--A bullet rips his cape, water spouts in front of him.

MCNELLY
Fire Boys--Fire!

RUDD
Fire!

ARMSTRONG
Fire!

MONTAGE--RANGERS--As if a leopard loosed from a chain--The Rangers raise their heavy rifles and fire. A ragged volley of heavy caliber--a clap of thunder.

CLOSE MCNELLY--He kicks his mount.

MCNELLY
Shotguns Boys--Charge!

CLOSE ARMSTRONG--Coolly drawing his shotgun as he scabbards his rifle--screaming a rebel yell--hurtling forward.

CLOSE OLD FRANK--A pistol in his left, a shotgun in his right howling--charging.

CLOSE DUNNISON--He puts his rifle down looking through the smoke. Pulls his shotgun--the charge carries him. He yells.

CLOSE DURHAM--He looks over the sights of his rifle as his horse is hit. It goes down headlong. He splashes into the water--another horse goes down. He comes up running through the shallow water--horses thundering by. He fires and reloads screaming a rebel yell--charging.

(CONTINUED)

CLOSE BERRY--He rides right up to a BANDITO trying to mount and leans out--shooting him full in the chest with one barrel, then the other--He finally crashes into the horse, toppling like a sack of broken melons.

DUNNISON--He rides straight at a MAN who shoots at him. He fires one barrel--then drops his gun and runs at him with a hatchet. Dunnison tries to control his whirling mount and fires the second barrel but the man ducks it and keeps coming. He raises the hatchet--Dunnison fumbles for his Colt. The man jumps onto him, his face red, contorted with anger as close as a lover. The hatchet flashes between them, hits the shotgun, the horse wheels about. Dunnison thumbs back the hammer--fires! The man bites and snaps at the air. Dunnison shoves the muzzle under his jaw and fires. He falls away.

DURHAM--Running up the edge of the marsh screaming--horses and shooting everywhere. He hears a horrible scream--turns to see a MAN impaled on Armstrong's Bowie knife. Armstrong, still on his horse, pulls him off his feet and carries him as the man screams his lungs out. A shot whistles by his ear--Durham turns to see a MAN in a fancy sombrero--with a scar down his face and dirty red hair--the man who quirted Mrs. Noakes and betrayed them. He fires at Durham from about ten yards and tries to mount his horse. He fires again. Durham stares transfixed and then raises the heavy rifle. It settles and he fires a tremendous blast. The man's head and hat are clouded with smoke and red and he's gone. Durham runs over--looks down. The bad-man's fancy boots kick violently but his head is gone. Durham reloads from his belt. The bandits are all running for the open prairie. He loads, cocks and settles on ONE being pursued by two Rangers. He fires, the horse goes down. The Rangers are upon the thrown rider instantly and he contorts in a cloud of smoke. Durham sees a riderless horse with a Dick Heye saddle--it bears the King Ranch Running W brand. Good enough! He mounts at the run and whips his steed out onto the plain.

CUT TO:

PALO VERDE PRAIRIE--Long and dry with small tufts of grass and the grey sea beyond. The clouds move low and fast as the storm is breaking up and light breaks through. The battle has turned into a running fight as the small figures of bandit horsemen run out across this plain pursued by Rangers.

CLOSE RUDD--Galloping at breakneck speed, his fine mount gaining on a MEXICAN BRAVO. The man fires desperately while whipping at his horse. Rudd pulls close, raises the shotgun leaving the reins free and fires. The bandit's head throws back violently, his arms drop and he bounces along dead this way until he slips from the saddle as Rudd reloads on the run.

OLD FRANK--Overhauls a MAN. He leans out of his saddle as if he's going to bulldog him--and shoots him carefully in the head with his pistol. The man is gone and Frank lashes his mount in pursuit of his partner. He is joined from the side by McNelly whose fine mount easily overtakes the MAN on the other side. Frank motions to the Captain that the man is his and drops back. McNelly fires twice quickly with his revolver and the man slumps holding onto the horse.

DUNNISON--SANTOS--Overhaul a COLORFUL VAQUERO. Santos fires his pistol--the horse spins around, going down. They are on him then overrun him. The Bravo scrambles to his feet firing at them with two guns. Santos shoots back. Dunnison has his rifle out--thumbs back the hammer.

SANTOS
Take him Senor Linc!

He spurs his horse which plunges up to the man who is dodging around. He fires at Dunnison perforating his hat. Dunnison leans out with both hands, and thrusts the rifle point blank into the man's face and fires. A great gout of smoke whips away on the wind--the man is blown spread-eagle into the wet sand on his back.

CLOSE BANDIT--HIS DEAD FACE--Mouth open staring wide eyed into the sky, his hat under his head.

CLOSE DUNNISON--Looking equally wide-eyed at the man he's just killed.

SANTOS
Andale Linc!

He wheels his horse, and they vault off in hot pursuit of the others.

DURHAM--Riding hell bent in pursuit of SEVERAL BANDITS. The Rangers ahead of him fire and a horse goes down. They bypass the downed desperado in favor of his compadres. A man unhorsed is not going far. As Durham rides up, the bandit gets to his feet and levers his rifle. Durham pulls up and throws down on the outlaw with his Sharps. They both fire at once. The bullet whips past Durham, but his smacks into the man throwing a mist of wet from the impact. The man staggers. Another impact followed by the noise of the shot sends him sprawling. Durham looks over his shoulder to see Sandoval with his Winchester. They look at the dead man and suddenly only the wind is heard. No more screams or horses or shots. They look around--riderless horses run by--bodies lay starkly on the flat wet sand. The Rangers in the distance and back towards the swamp seem to know the chase is over. A group heads towards them. It is Old Frank, Rudd, McNelly and several others. In the far distance the last few bandits escape. Other riders come in--Durham looks at Sandoval who gives him a deep smile.

CUT TO:

DUNNISON--He rides back to the man he killed, sprawled on the sand. He gets off--looks around--from all over, little groups or single Rangers are coming back to the battlefield. He dismounts, looks again at the man and takes off his hat. He holds it in his hand piously for a second, and notices the bullet hole in it. He throws it away and leans down and takes the wide sombrero--shakes the brains out of it and puts it on his head and remounts.

CUT TO:

MCNELLY--Riding back as the others assemble around him. Armstrong comes up from the marsh followed by Dunnison and Berry. Armstrong rides by--looks out at the other riders coming in and wheels his horse around to McNelly's side.

ARMSTRONG
All done Cap'n.

MCNELLY
Casualties?

ARMSTRONG
None Sir--All present and accounted for.

A burst of pride goes across their faces, the tension lets out. They want to whoop and holler, but they hold themselves back. Each face says "We did it--We sure did." They all sit tall, no longer boys and something more than mere men--Rangers!

MCNELLY--He notices Dunnison.

MCNELLY
Nice hat you got there Linc.

Dunnison almost melts.

MCNELLY (CONT'D) (to the others)
Now lookie here what Dunnison's got. You all do the same. Take something from 'em--spurs, sash, serape. Let their people in Brownsville know what we've done. This is a day that'll be remembered--the Battle of Palo Verde Prairie. Take something to remember it by.

RUDD
You heard the Cap'n.

MONTAGE--They cheer--laugh--howl or shake their heads--every one of them.

CLOSE MCNELLY--He rides up to Dunnison and Durham.

MCNELLY
Splendid performance Boys--Well done.

(CONTINUED)

He rides off leaving the two of them sitting very tall in the saddle. Berry rides up joining them.

BERRY
You need a hat George.

Durham feels his bare head. Dunnison reaches up and unstrings his new sombrero--hands it to Durham. It's back is stained crimson.

DURHAM
Kinda dirty.

DUNNISON
It'll dry out.

DURHAM
But it's yours.

DUNNISON
It's a gift.

He takes it, puts it on--tightens the cord so it rides back on his head.

DURHAM
How do I look?

BERRY
Like a ring-tailed roarer.

DUNNISON
--Half man--half gator and a touch of the earthquake.

They turn and ride away proud. It's a very lucky day and it's wonderful to be alive.

CUT TO:

BROWNSVILLE--The central square by a big fountain. Santos and another Ranger pull the body of a bandito from Scipio's wagon. Scipio himself carries another one. The bodies are stiff with rictus, their faces pulled tight into hideous grins and smiles. PEOPLE rush from buildings--quickly becoming a crowd. The Rangers dump the corpses like sacks of flour on the ground in front of the fountain. Behind, most of the Company sit horse.

MAN
Lookit--that's Dob Klimer.

ANOTHER
It shore is.

OTHER MAN
The one on the end is the Parrel boy.

WOMAN
This is what comes of living with the Devil.

MAN
Yeah--well a lot of these fellas lived here.

A MAN in a suit steps forward.

MAN IN SUIT
Which one is McNelly?

ARMSTRONG
We're all little McNelly's.

MCNELLY
I'm the Captain. What a' you want?

MAN IN SUIT
Was there a warrant for this?

MCNELLY
They were caught with stolen livestock.

ARMSTRONG
--And they're all in the Book.

CLOSE DUNNISON--DURHAM--SANDOVAL--Dunnison looks for the man he killed.

DUNNISON (points)
That one.

SANDOVAL
His name was Incarnacion Delgado and he was muy malo hombre. Loco peligroso.

Durham shrugs impressed. Sandoval shrugs. Berry looks out at the crowd.

BERRY
These folks don't like us too much.

SANDOVAL
It's not so easy for them no more eh?

CLOSE MCNELLY--The man in the suit is looking over the corpses.

MCNELLY
What's your name Mister.

The man looks up startled.

MAN
I ain't in that book.

MCNELLY
Your name?

MAN
Bellweather--Clyde Bellweather.

Armstrong goes through the book.

MCNELLY
Who do you work for Clyde?

He stammers.

MCNELLY (CONT'D)
You don't work for Mr. Fisher don't you.

CLYDE
Yes Sir.

MCNELLY
Where's Fisher?

ARMSTRONG
The Cap'n asked you a question Mister.

He points down the street to several large buildings. McNelly spurs his mount, the others follow close behind.

COAST HOUSE INN--A saloon/hotel/brothel. Sure enough, standing on the wooden veranda is King Fisher and several dandified GUNMEN and GAMBLERS. McNelly stops in front of him. Dust rises and the crowd approaches warily.

MCNELLY
Where were you today King?

FISHER
Minding my business--Captain.

At that moment an attractive YOUNG WOMAN steps through the door. She is well dressed and takes her place at Fisher's arm.

MCNELLY
I brought some of your friends home.
I guess they stayed out too late. You
should look after 'em better.

FISHER
I'll remember this Captain.

MCNELLY
I'll see that you do.

McNelly looks over the men.

MCNELLY (CONT'D)
I don't recognize these Boys--
Where's your favorite?

FISHER
Who'd that be?

MCNELLY
John Westley Hardin--I was hoping to find him with you. He's got an appointment with my rope.

Fisher just stares. He's not ever talked to this way, especially in front of a crowd.

MCNELLY (CONT'D)
Who's the Lady?

FISHER
This is my wife.

McNelly tips his hat.

MCNELLY
Ma'am. You've a nice wife King and a nice place. But you don't have much of a future.

FISHER
That so--these Boys look mighty young to be making such bold talk.

He points to Dunnison.

FISHER (CONT'D)
I know you Son--seems you had trouble keeping your pants up.

MCNELLY
You know Mr. Dunnison?

FISHER
We played at cards once.

MCNELLY
Was it a fair game Lincoln?

DUNNISON
No Sir.

MCNELLY
Then I take it you won.

DUNNISON
Yes Sir--I did.

MCNELLY
You remember that too Mr. Fisher.

He turns his horse and starts down the street. Dunnison's and Fisher's eyes meet. Fisher's gaze is cold blue, the gaze of a seasoned professional killer, but Dunnison has esprit de corps in his--so it's a standoff. At that moment Corporal Rudd rides up at a gallop.

RUDD
Telegraph Captain--from Rio Grande City.

MCNELLY
Read it Corporal.

RUDD
It's from a Captain Randlett, Ninth U.S. Cavalry. --"A force of thirty bandits crossing Rio Grande at Las Cuevas with upwards of one hundred fifty beeves. Have pursued to International Boundary and await reinforcements and further orders."

McNelly looks back at Fisher who stands his ground.

MCNELLY
Well--the boys we ran into were just to pull us off. Didn't work all that well, but it answers a question.

He rides back a few paces.

MCNELLY (CONT'D) (to Fisher)
Seems like we've located your friend Mr. Hardin. I'll give him your regards.

He turns back.

MCNELLY (CONT'D)
Column of two's.

RUDD
Column of two's!

CUT TO:

MONTAGE--THE RANGER COMPANY--Galloping out of Brownsville--Across the Wild Horse Desert and down to the Rio Grande. The pace is relentless and the day darkens into night.

RANGERS--Galloping along the river--the horses snorting great plumes that hang for a bit in the still night cold.

CUT TO:

RETALIATION--LAS CUEVAS

CAVALRY CAPTAIN RANDLETT--A handsome dark featured man standing on a bluff overlooking the river. On the other side are bonfires and much commotion--as what seems like a bandit army carouse and frolic before the impotent U.S. troops. They drive cattle down into the water to see if they'll swim back--then they laugh and jeer as the helpless animals try and turn around in the current. Captain Randlett's men are BLACK TROOPS, who are dismounted and dug in along the trees to his side. An occasional shot flashes and cracks from the other side. A NEGRO SERGEANT comes up to him.

SERGEANT
Major Clendenhen is arriving from Rhingold Barracks with Infantry reinforcements and a Gattling Gun Sir.

RANDLETT
How far out?

SERGEANT
He should be here within the hour Sir.

RANDLETT
Who are those men that just arrived?

SERGEANT
That'd be Captain McNelly with his State Police--Irregular Cavalry.

RANDLETT
Rangers! --Where is Captain McNelly now Sergeant?

SERGEANT
Why in his camp Sir--I believe they is sleeping.

CUT TO:

THE RANGER CAMP--Sure enough the Rangers are asleep. Scipio's wagon has just arrived and a fire is being built. Randlett is brought by Santos to Berry who stands guard outside the Captain's tent.

BERRY
Oh-no Sir you can't wake him up. The Cap'n needs his sleep as we all do. We're gonna cross the river in a couple of hours.

RANDLETT
Cross the river!

CUT TO:

MCNELLY--Eating with everyone else. Beef, lots of it--and more beef cooks on the spits--McNelly looks up at Randlett and his superior, MAJOR CLENDENHEN.

CLENDENHEN
My orders are clear--I am to hold this position until diplomatic procedures are exhausted.

MCNELLY
Then I am to understand you will not support me even if I git in a fix?

CLENDENHEN
I reiterate Captain--There is a bandit city across that river and if you go over there you are going to be killed. I am not authorized to commit this Nation to an invasion of Mexico on your behalf. You cannot dictate the foreign policy of the United States Captain McNelly! Do you understand that!

MCNELLY
Yep.

CLENDENHEN
Then you will listen to reason?

MCNELLY
Nope.

CUT TO:

WAGON--FIRELIGHT--The Rangers up and rubbing their eyes--lined up before Scipio's wagon as he and a few helpers pack beef into pots and cover them with burlap. Others pass out new Army bandoliers of .45-.70 ammunition and whole boxes of .45 Colt pistol cartridges. Each man takes a box and two bandoliers. Dunnison, Durham and Berry give each other apprehensive glances. There is a strange quiet that pervades. Everyone knows what this means. The relief they shared at surviving yesterday's fight seems like a hundred years ago.

CUT TO:

THE RANGER COMPANY--Thirty five strong in a column of two's move quietly down to the edge of the river. The darkness hides all but the glitter of weapons and the breath of the horses. The river, running high rushes through the night before them. They reach a beach area covered with broken trees.

ARMSTRONG
Dismount--

RUDD
Line abreast Lads--Hold your own mounts.

Before them is McNelly, Captain Randlett, LIEUTENANTS, and several SERGEANTS. The Company assembles facing McNelly.

MCNELLY
Boys--over yonder is Las Cuevas. That's where they live. They took one hundred fifty Texican beeves from the King Ranch. They spilled Texican blood doing it. I'm going to bring those beeves back.

There is a slight murmuring and nervous silence.

MCNELLY (CONT'D)
We licked 'em good--you saw to that. They'll be getting the word about now. If we can cross and lick 'em again where they live, where there ain't no place to hide--Well Boys, I think you know that would be a fine day.

He turns to Captain Randlett.

MCNELLY (CONT'D)
Now the Army here can't guarantee anything--but if we get into trouble Captain Randlett here says he won't let us go down alone.

RANDLETT
That's unofficial of course, but I do admire your Captain's sand.

MCNELLY
I can't order you to go with me. You were hired to fight in Texas, not Mexico. We'll be on our own. I can't guarantee to bring you back. All I can guarantee is a dang good scrap. I won't send you--I'll lead you.

He turns and paces.

MCNELLY (CONT'D)
Captain Randlett--your sabre Sir.

Randlett draws his sabre and hands it to McNelly.

MCNELLY (CONT'D)
Anyone who decides to stay will still have a job when we get back.

RANGER
Sir--I got a chance to--

MCNELLY
It's alright Son--hold the horses.

OTHER RANGER
I don't want no fight in Mexico.

MCNELLY
Go on Son--it's alright.

Several others join him. Then there is an uneasy silence. McNelly walks before them and draws a line in the sand with the sabre like Travis did at the Alamo. Without saying a word Sergeant Armstrong and Corporal Rudd cross the line. As McNelly walks forward more men step across--Santos, Berry, Sandoval, a MAN named DEAF RECTOR. More cross. The sabre goes before Dunnison and Durham. They look at each other and as one they cross.

CLOSE MCNELLY--A smile of deep satisfaction. Twenty eight men plus himself. Only one remains--Old Frank.

MCNELLY
It's alright Frank.

OLD FRANK
Oh Hell Leander--if you put it that way.

He steps across.

OLD FRANK (CONT'D)
--I ain't served with a man as crazy as you since Cap'n Quantrell.

MCNELLY
Then that settles it. Leave your horses with them that stayed. Sergeant Armstrong, Corporal Rudd and Jesus--you swim yours across. The rest bring the food and extra ammunition.

They follow him.

MCNELLY (CONT'D)
There's wood boats hid in them cottonwoods.

CUT TO:

THE RANGERS--Pulling the boats out of the brush--assembling supples--loading--all with the help of Captain Randlett and some of his men. Downstream the fire lights of El Rancho Las Cuevas can be seen--and the mariachi music and howls of drunkenness carry across the rush of water.

RIVER'S BANK--The boats assembled and ready.

MCNELLY
Someone's gonna have to swim it and get a line across. Who's a good swimmer?

ARMSTRONG
I'll swim my horse--

MCNELLY
Too loud--

DUNNISON
I can do it.

They all look at him.

CUT TO:

DUNNISON--Stripped to his pants and bare feet, a large coil of rope in the crook of his arm and a huge Bowie knife tied to his leg. He puts mud on his face and starts to enter the cold rushing water. McNelly leans down.

MCNELLY
Tie off and pull three times if'n it's all clear.

DUNNISON
What if it's not?

MCNELLY
Then I guess we'll try something else.

He shrugs, like--"That's life". Dunnison shrugs back and enters the water.

CUT TO:

TELEGRAPH STATION--In the trees across from Las Cuevas. Major Clendenhen, his AIDE, and SEVERAL OTHERS sit around their Headquarter's tent. A Ranger rides up and dismounts at the run.

RANGER
That thing go through to Austin?

CLENDENHEN
What a' you want to know for?

RANGER
Message from the Cap'n.

CLENDENHEN
Let me see it.

RANGER
Cain't do that Sir--But you can hear it. That thing go through to Austin?

(CONTINUED)

CLENDENHEN
It goes straight to the War Department in Washington young man. Maybe President Grant would like to know what your Captain is up to--Send his damn message.

CLOSE OPERATOR--Tapping away.

RANGER
--"Have commenced crossing at one o'clock. Have thirty men. Will recover cattle. U.S. Troops have promised to cover my return--"

CLENDENHEN
I specifically did not!

RANGER
--"Signed McNelly".

CUT TO:

DUNNISON--Swimming for his life in the black swift current of the Rio Grande in November. The water is cold, fed by the recent storms--and the night is dark and windy. Dunnison doesn't see the logs and tangles of brush that batter him and tangles the rope that he lets out. He goes under, comes up gasping, and grabs ahold of a fallen tree that sweeps him towards shore. He lets out the rope frantically, and breaks from the tree towards the dark shoreline. Finally he feels the bank with his feet and drags himself out.

CLOSE DUNNISON--Exhausted, he scrambles up into the brush, and none too soon. The sound of horses and jangling equipment is heard beyond. He looks through the brush and sees a MAN on a white horse--silver fittings gleam from his attire--a broad sombrero is worn. He is flanked by ten or twelve mounted MEXICAN CAVALRY. They ride away towards Las Cuevas. Dunnison pulls the rope taut trying to unsnare it. He ties it tight around a cottonwood and pulls sharply three times.

CUT TO:

THE BOATS--Of the assault force in mid river guided by the rope. McNelly stands in the front like George Washington. Armstrong and Sandoval swim their horses leading two or three others.

RUDD
Gentlemen we are about to embark on foreign soil.

MCNELLY
Then show the Colors!

Santos unfurls a flag on a pole. The flag is not of the United States but the Lone Star flag of Texas.

(CONTINUED)

RIVER BANK--The boats come ashore--the men scramble out and rush up the beach into the dark brush. The boats are hauled into cover--equipment and food are brought ashore--shotguns and bandoliers, shovels and blankets. Invasion!

CUT TO:

CLOSE DUNNISON--Surrounded by the others wrapped in a blanket. Armstrong moves the flank pickets out silently with hand signals.

DUNNISON
--Was a fancy dressed chap--big sombrero lots of conchos.

MCNELLY
And there was Cavalry with him?

DUNNISON
Yeah with tall hats.

MCNELLY
That'd be General Flores.

ARMSTRONG
That means they're all in on it. This is War.

MCNELLY
Nope--this is a police action--War's another thing--Alright! Listen here--Count off.

RUDD
Count from the right.

The Boys count off trying to keep it quiet.

MCNELLY
Even numbers are First Rank--odd Second--Every dab take a shotgun and bandolier. Pass it down and Let's move out.

CUT TO:

RUDD--Crouched in the brush--moves his hand--Scouts run forward followed by the main body. A ground fog drifts over the bean field and cactus that border the settlement. Mariachi music drifts across.

FENCE--Made of cactus and mesquite. Armstrong and Sandoval glide up on horseback throw lariats over the gate and quickly pull it down. They ride through as others leap over in a fast advance.

(CONTINUED)

CLOSE DUNNISON--DAB--Durham carries the shotgun. They move with the others as they've practiced. The fog is thick where they are coming from--a gully that leads to the river. The music is much closer. Suddenly they come upon several adobe huts lit by a fire and lanterns. They emerge from the fog to startle some PEASANTS who are just as surprised. A WOMAN pats out tortillas and doesn't change her rythmn. A MAN grabs a machete, ANOTHER breaks and runs into the fog. Durham fires--the man falls into infinity--another shot rings out and another. A scream.

DURHAM
I--I had to do it.

Sandoval is suddenly rushing by on his powerful mount, his pistol trailing smoke--then he's gone. Old Frank emerges from the fog and motions them forward. The man drops his machete and starts to pray. The woman beats out the tortillas, a CHILD watches from behind her.

DURHAM (CONT'D)
I had to.

FRANK
You get him?

They move into the fog.

CLOSE MCNELLY--Who emerges onto a levee where the fog seems to stop. Before him is the adobe walled settlement of Las Cuevas. It is built as a defensive fortress but the walls are low on this, the weak side. Numerous lights and GROUPS OF MILLING PEOPLE can be seen. Between him and Las Cuevas are innumerable cattle and horses--some of them in pens. The music stops, another shot rings out--a rifle. Horsemen thunder by in the distance. McNelly looks down the line at his Rangers as they emerge from the fog. Armstrong rides up to his side.

MCNELLY
Get down in the brush and spread out. Shoot on my command. Kill 'em all--don't pick and choose.

The Rangers take positions below and behind the brushy levee. The order is passed down. More shots ripple out--answered by a few booms of the .45-.70's. A MAN falls in the settlement. MEN rush about trying to get horses--only the horses are all in front of the Rangers.

MCNELLY
Lay into 'em Boys! Fire at will!

RUDD
Fire at will!

(CONTINUED)

The ragged volley rips through the night--a few horses go down. The BANDITS fire back--the whole settlement is cracking with reports and flashes. There is much screaming in Spanish.

CLOSE DURHAM--He leans his rifle over the levee and fires. Dunnison reloads. Berry fires.

BERRY
I got one!

They have the advantage of the bandits being silhouetted by the lit buildings with the hanging lanterns behind them--and so the Rangers can see their targets and their sights. The bandit's fire is high and whistles overhead. But the CHIEFTAINS are organizing and a GROUP OF MOUNTED MEN come screaming up at them. Armstrong rides across the levee firing with his Winchester. Sandoval follows and the bandit rush follows them.

RUDD
Hold! Hold Lads!

The Horsemen bear down--they ride past the Rangers in the brush and up the levee.

RUDD (CONT'D)
Now!

Durham stands up and blows a BRAVO off his horse at point blank range--turns and takes ANOTHER with the second barrel. All the other shotguns boom out--BODIES fall and scream. A nearby Ranger is shot off his feet by a passing HORSEMAN. Berry fires at him taking his horse down while Dunnison pulls Durham down.

DUNNISON
Get down damn you!

RUDD
Fall back--Fall back! Form a skirmish line!

They cover as the outer Rangers rush back reloading and form into a loose line in the brush. The enemy charge is broken but a fresh group of about FORTY RIDERS fans out screaming and waving sabers and pistols.

MCNELLY
Sergeant Armstrong volley fire!

ARMSTRONG
All Ranks kneel!

The charge thunders towards them. They are at the edge of the fog. The horsemen crest the levee. The Ranks are concealed behind brush.

ARMSTRONG (CONT'D)
First Rank fire!

They fire at the splendid targets displayed like a shooting gallery. Horses and men scream and tumble, but the mass comes on.

ARMSTRONG (CONT'D)
Withdraw and load--Second Rank fire!

CUT TO:

RANGERS--MONTAGE--Their faces trying to find their sights--the guns kicking in a sharp volley. BANDITS--torn from their saddles--Horses scream and go down.

CLOSE ARMSTRONG.

ARMSTRONG
Second Rank--withdraw! First Rank fire!

CLOSE DUNNISON--DURHAM--BERRY--SANTOS--FRANK--They blast into the charging horde.

CLOSE RUDD--He fires his repeater from the flank.

RUDD
Steady Lads--look to your right Lads.

ARMSTRONG
Second Rank--fire!

Again the thunderous volley--this time it's too much. Men and horses are blown flat. In a few seconds almost thirty men and animals are dead or wounded. The remnants have no heart for it and flee screaming.

CLOSE MCNELLY--He sees a greater danger. MEXICAN CAVALRY and BANDITS are riding out to the flanks trying to go around the Texans.

MCNELLY
To your flanks Mr. Rudd--Sergeant
Armstrong take them back to the river!

Armstrong is there, big and powerful against the smoke and fog.

ARMSTRONG
First Rank pull back to the river.
Second Rank cover them flanks.

They fire at long range, but it keeps the Cavalry at bay as they disappear into the sanctuary of the fog.

CUT TO:

RIVER BANK--Where they landed. The Rangers swing axes frantically--cut down trees, brush. Others dig with shovels, Bowie knives, hands. Still others guard the position staring out into the foggy night. Sandoval drags a tree by the foreground where the Boys are. Armstrong, unmounted, sharpens stakes with an axe. The Boys dig in one of two diagonal trenches going down to the water's edge. A shot or two sounds occasionally--lost in the fog.

ARMSTRONG
Casoose--take your dab out on down the river bank. Don't let them come around through the shallows.

The Boys jump up and give their shovels to others.

ARMSTRONG (CONT'D)
Durham! Take a shovel.

He does. Armstrong shakes his head like they were trying to get out of digging when each one wants to dig to China. They follow Sandoval, who is on horseback dragging a tree out onto a lonely spit cut off from the land by a shallow channel. Fog rushes by.

CUT TO:

COMMUNICATIONS TENT--HEADQUARTERS COMPANY--Across the river. Clendenhen, OTHER OFFICERS wait as a BLACK STAFF SERGEANT takes down the message on the telegraph.

SERGEANT
It's from the War Department directly.

CLENDENHEN
Gentlemen, we can assume President Grant is standing by.

A CAVALRYMAN gallops up over the hill. Desultory firing and yelling can be heard from the river. The man dismounts at the gallop--he and his animal coming into the tent.

CAVALRYMAN
Sir--The Captain told me to tell you that them Texans is engaged.

More firing.

CLENDENHEN
Thank you Son that seems to be the case.

SERGEANT
Alright Sir.

CLENDENHEN
Read it.

(CONTINUED)

SERGEANT
Hold present position until negotiated settlement can be achieved. Do not--Repeat--Do not allow U.S. Troops or Citizens to escalate hostilities.

CLENDENHEN
Where is your Captain Son?

CAVALRYMAN
He's in the river Sir.

CLENDENHEN
River!

CAVALRYMAN
Yes Sir--He doin' his reconnaissance. Which means he in the river Sir.

CLENDENHEN
What's he think he's doing in that river?

CAVALRYMAN
Swimmin' to the other side.

CUT TO:

DUNNISON--Digging with his knife--Durham works the shovel and Berry digs scoops with his hands. Sandoval stands looking out into the night.

DUNNISON
Wait--you hear something?

DURHAM
Just my stomach grumblin'.

DUNNISON
No--I mean it.

He stands up. Berry does too. Sure enough, there's splashing out there. Dunnison grabs his Sharps. Sandoval raises his Winchester. Durham stands up. Dunnison fires--a great orange blast and gout of smoke takes away in the fog. Sandoval and Berry fire with rifle and pistol.

DURHAM
Stop--Stop--Listen!

VOICE (O.S.)
Don't--Oh God don't shoot me. I'm goin' under.

OTHER VOICE (O.S.)
Captain Randlett United States Army! You've shot one of my men. Cease Fire! Cease Fire!

(CONTINUED)

DUNNISON
You believe 'em?

DURHAM
Hell no!

He raises his rifle--cocks it.

MCNELLY (O.S.)
Hold it!

They turn to see McNelly on the bank.

MCNELLY (CONT'D)
Help 'em in damn it! You think them bandits know the Cap'n's name?

Berry, Durham and Dunnison rush out into the foggy shallows and where FIGURES are splashing. Sandoval stands ready trusting no one.

CLOSE MCNELLY--Standing ominously in his Rebel Officer's cloak--a dark figure much bigger now than he actually is--as the men chop and dig all around him in the thick fog.

CUT TO:

BLACK ARMY TROOPS--CAPTAIN RANDLETT--All shirtless or in Union suits shivering under blankets next to some coals that are carefully kept from becoming a fire. ONE of them is laid cold by the river's edge under a wet serape, a victim of friendly fire, like Stonewall Jackson.

RANDLETT (breathing hard still)
--None of us are supposed to--that's why--we have--no uniforms.

MCNELLY
Slow down Son.

RANDLETT
Swallowed half the river--Would of all gone under weren't for your man there--

He nods to Scipio, who wrapped like an Indian, stares stoically out toward the enemy.

MCNELLY
Scipio swims like a gator.

Scipio pays no mention.

RANDLETT
Got a--Gattling Gun laid in on the other side--need a mark to shoot at--

CUT TO:

CLOSE DURHAM--DUNNISON--BERRY. A BLACK SOLDIER--In suspenders, trousers and undershirt is led down to their position by Sandoval.

SANDOVAL
Hey Boys! This is our new Hermano.

SOLDIER
Corporal Cyrus Reed 9th U.S. Cavalry.

He flops down in their pit with a carbine and bandolier.

DURHAM
What brought you across Son?

Reed is at least seven or eight years older thanDurham.

REED
I goes where my Cap'n goes.

DURHAM
I understand.

BERRY
Yep.

REED
You the ones that shot at us--killed Private Yarnell.

A silence.

DUNNISON
Yeah--it was a mistake.

He considers this.

REED
Where you from Reb?

DUNNISON
Pennsylvania--Philadelphia Pennsylvania.

CUT TO:

MCNELLY--Looking out into the night--Scipio and Old Frank at his side. The cut brush has been piled into a barricade above the trenches. Sharpened stakes jut out towards the enemy. Armstrong rushes up.

SCIPIO
--Shouldn't a' left me over there all alone--Shouldn't a' done that. I could a' gone in that boat--be dry and warm--

MCNELLY
Boat might a' broke.

(CONTINUED)

SCIPIO
Aw shut your mouth.

OLD FRANK
They gonna try an' take us Cap'n?

MCNELLY
They have to--already lost face. Got no cojones if they don't.

Randlett comes forward with a BIG SERGEANT carrying a large keg of powder wrapped in oil cloth slickers.

MCNELLY (CONT'D) (to Armstrong)
Put it all over the wood and surround it with straw and anything dry. Make sure there's a big pile in the center.

He turns to Randlett.

MCNELLY (CONT'D)
Now you go on back and tell your Gun Boys that when they see this light up--They gotta give me two hundred rounds all over and around us. Two hundred and not one more--as fast as they can crank.

RANDLETT
Some of you'll be in the way.

MCNELLY
Why you think I dug them pits. Now git going--two hundred rounds.

DISSOLVE TO:

THE MOON--Seen through wisps of fog as it starts to lift.

CUT TO:

DUNNISON--Staring up into the sky.

DUNNISON
I can see the Big Dipper.

DURHAM
God how'd we'd ever get into a place like this. That fellow was right--if we die here in Old Mexico they'll cut us up and feed us to the hogs.

BERRY
What's it matter if you dead--you'll be gone on your way.

DUNNISON
You believe in Heaven Berry?

BERRY
Right now I shore do.

DUNNISON
Suppose this is it--like the Alamo--
an' all you had was one night with the
Ladies. Well it was good.

DURHAM
Yeah an' look at what we been through
already. I can't imagine God sending
me an' Judy all the way from Georgia to
die here in Old Mexico.

DUNNISON
No George, I can't see him going to all
that trouble. If it makes you feel better.

BERRY
Whyn't you shut up.

DUNNISON
Why?

BERRY
Cause here they come.

They look out and see what seems like hundreds of torches emerge from the distant fog. All of a sudden the air is alive with screaming in Spanish and bullets whipping overhead like hornets.

DURHAM
Torches--they got torches.

DUNNISON
That's so we can shoot at them--stupid.

He does--the whole line opens up. Both trenches loose a ragged volley and not a few torches go down. Suddenly the thunder of hooves shakes the ground.

RUDD (O.S.)
Fire at will Lads! Fire at will!

They fire and reload as fast as they can. The torches turn into shapes and grow closer, shapes become dark fleeting FIGURES of horses and MEN seeming to glide ghostlike over the ground as if they are flying. Occasionally ONE turns and tumbles almost gracefully. Sharp crackles and spikes of fire leap out of the shapes--and wood shatters and twigs snap.

CLOSE MCNELLY--He stands calmly at the head of the V of his defences. He fires his pistol carefully until it's empty. Scipio and Old Frank fire Winchesters as quick as they can lever. THE HORSEMEN are almost on them.

OLD FRANK
Get down Cap'n!

Bullets rip up the wood around him. Scipio pulls him down as a horse vaults over. Frank shotguns the RIDER screaming off into the night. McNelly draws his second pistol--MORE HORSEMEN vault the barricade. Rudd blasts ONE with a shotgun, hacks ANOTHER down with his knife. Santos pulls a RIDER down and kills him with his shovel. He takes his guns and empties into ANOTHER. Everywhere is screaming chaos--a horse crashes down kicking and pinning screaming MEN underneath who in turn rip at each other with flashing knives. Enough HORSEMEN have cleared the barricade and they turn to pounce and fire on it from the rear when McNelly fires his revolver into the powder piled in front of him. The flash is bright and blinding and roars up the wood igniting some of it. It lights up Santos who is run through by a LANCER and falls.

CLOSE ARMSTRONG--He fires his shotgun screaming.

ARMSTRONG
Get down! Get in your holes Boys!

CLOSE DUNNISON--Who shoots down a horse crashing through the water. The light illuminates him. He fumbles for his pistols as MORE RIDERS splash between him and the bank. Durham runs out and pulls him down and swings his rifle by the barrel taking a MAN off his horse with a loud crack. Durham pulls Dunnison back into their hole.

CUT TO:

GATTLING GUN--Positioned on the opposite bank. A crack BLACK GUN CREW at the ready. The fire rises up and starts to go out quickly. Torches are seen everywhere. A tree burns briskly. Randlett stands with his saber.

RANDLETT
Fire.

SERGEANT
You sure?

RANDLETT
Fire!

They fire into the maelstrom, the shots a steady cadence as the GUNNER turns the crank.

CLOSE DUNNISON--Laying on his back. Heavy bullets whip by and thud into the sand and mud all around him. A horse crashes down on them--the RIDER scurries to his feet--Dunnison blasts him with both guns. ANOTHER flashes by, turns--Berry thrusts his arm out and fires--the man screams and rides away. Corporal Reed kneels up and takes a shot--a horse screams and crashes

into the thicket. He reloads and lurches to his feet, drops his carbine and holds his chest and pitches forward.

CUT TO:

GUN CREW--Changing magazines. They resume their steady fusillade.

CUT TO:

MCNELLY--SCIPIO--OLD FRANK--Crouched in their trenches. A MAN falls in and is quickly knifed. The screaming now is "Vamos!". These men are not soldiers, they are thieves and they want no more of this. The horses vault back over them. The firing continues--then stops--sporatic fire from the Rangers. The night is lit by the burning trees. McNelly gets up.

MCNELLY
Look around you Boys--They're gone!

CUT TO:

ACROSS THE RIVER--The soldiers and cavalrymen have all come to the water's edge--straining to see what's happening in the dim light of the dying fire. HORSEMEN thunder by splashing in the shallows but are still indistinct. The gun crew in the foreground follow the noise of the horses with a new tall magazine inserted.

SERGEANT
Sir?

RANDLETT
No.

The horsemen are gone--retreated into the safety of darkness. Now only the agonizing cries of the wounded are heard over the sound of the river--cries for help, for mother, cries of desperate anger and pain.

CUT TO:

DUNNISON--Gets up looks around, pistol in either hand. A HORSEMAN flashes past in the channel, he fires, the horse stumbles sideways--the man falls from it. The horse bolts and the man staggers to his feet. Dunnison aims carefully and fires--the man collapses. Durham stands by his side with his broken rifle. He looks at it--the stock is cracked and splintered through the wrist. He looks back at the man Dunnison shot.

DURHAM
I guess they had enough.

BERRY
For now.

(CONTINUED)

A sparkling behind them turns their heads. In the water, a MEXICAN BANDIT thrashes about in some mysterious death agony. He growls and spasms, almost biting himself. It is the man who Durham brained with his rifle butt. Berry goes over to him though the water.

DURHAM
Shoot him Berry.

But before the boy can raise his gun, a blast of smoke and point of fire double him over. The Mexican still thrashes growling. Berry turns around crying like a child--gasping sobs.

DUNNISON
Berry--No! Berry--

He runs and grabs him. Durham gets to him too, but sees the Mexican twist. He smashes down on him with the broken rifle--pieces of wood and brains flying in the water. He beats him with the barreled action like a hammer.

CLOSE DUNNISON--BERRY--Berry goes on his hands and knees, tries to crawl out of the water sobbing, Dunnison helping him. He breathes hard like he can't get enough air and then shakes as he falls into the water biting the air. Then he's still. Now the sobs are Dunnison's, as if all of this is finally on his shoulders. He breaks down on top of Berry's dead body. Durham stands over frustrated, tears rolling down his cheeks--what's left of the bloody rifle he drops. In a rage he pulls his revolver and fires into the dead Mexican--at the water--at Las Cuevas.

RUDD (O.S.)
What's going on out there? Cease fire!
Cease fire Lads!

ARMSTRONG (O.S.)
You ain't got it to spend--They'll be back.

MCNELLY (O.S.)
Pull in the line--tighten it up--Casualties
Mr. Rudd?

They pull Berry's body up into their hole.

DISSOLVE TO:

DAWN--THE FOG--Floats low above the fields and thinly over the river. The sky is pale in the east. Dunnison and Durham stare blankly out at the carnage exposed by the light--horses, men in black clumps--twisted in impossible agonies. A flight of teal rush by on the river, their wings making a whispering noise. Toads and coots make their morning sounds. The bodies of Berry and Reed are wrapped in old blankets and serapes--and tied with their belts into neat bloodstained bundles. They lay on the riverbank across from the little channel. Still there are moans of the wounded.

CUT TO:

MCNELLY--Looking down his line. He shivers and coughs deep into his coat. Scipio holds him until he stops shaking. He takes a sip of whiskey, breathes better. Rudd scans the far treeline with his binoculars.

CUT TO:

RANDLETT--Looking through his binoculars. The Gattling Gun at the ready, SCORES OF BLACK INFANTRY with their long tom Springfields dug in on the bank with their sights elevated and ready. Major Clendenhen sits on a horse on the bluff--everyone watching, waiting.

CUT TO:

SANDOVAL--Riding down the river bank on his fine black stallion. He splashes up to the Boys.

DURHAM (indicates horse)
How'd he get through it?

SANDOVAL
I hide him good. Capitan wants me to go look for some banditos and see if we can find his friend among the dead.

DUNNISON
What friend?

SANDOVAL
Pete--Pete Marsele--Capitan hopes we find him.

DURHAM
He said he sent you--What's this "We" business.

SANDOVAL
I think you owe me Amigo.

CUT TO:

THE DAB--In the broad sunlight walking the battlefield while the toads croak, the robins wake up, and the fog burns off. They are so naked it doesn't matter and they walk upright like hunters with guns laid over their arms like they were following a bird dog. There are bodies strewn in the sand and grass--everywhere. A man pokes his head up. Durham raises Berry's rifle--the man crosses himself and Durham goes on. Sandoval notices something, the Boys come over. It is a dead white horse and not far from it is the body of the Grandee that Dunnison saw ride in. His head is twisted as if he broke his neck when the horse went down--otherwise he looks somewhat peacefully asleep. A bee hums around his open mouth. Dunnison kneels beside him--his belt and conchos gleam and sparkle.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SANDOVAL
El Jefe General Flores--take his pistol.

Dunnison pulls a shiny engraved top-break Smith and Wesson from his holster.

SANDOVAL (CONT'D)
Leave the other one in his hand--that is how he died.

Indeed the mate is clutched in his death grip.

SANDOVAL (CONT'D)
Vamanos!

They leave--Dunnison looking back at the fallen leader.

CUT TO:

THE PISTOL--In Dunnison's hand--he shows it to McNelly proudly.

SANDOVAL
The pistol of General Flores.

MCNELLY
Let's see that.

He takes it, looks it over--pearl grips with a Mexican eagle carved on them. He puts it in his own belt.

MCNELLY (CONT'D)
Get on back to your posts.

They turn--though Dunnison is somewhat flustered.

MCNELLY (CONT'D)
Durham, Dunnison.

They turn.

MCNELLY (CONT'D)
You did good work--I'm sorry about Private Smith--We'll do our best to get his body back to Texas.

DURHAM
Thank you Sir.

They leave.

MCNELLY (to Rudd)
Make sure I mention those Boys in dispatches. I was first mentioned in dispatches to General Forrest himself. I wasn't any older than they are.

(CONTINUED)

He looks around.

MCNELLY (CONT'D)
--And it wasn't such a devil of a fight.

Suddenly Armstrong comes galloping back and vaults the barricade, his powerful horse almost shaking the stillness.

ARMSTRONG
Riders! Here they come Cap'n!

They all look out, but instead of the expected onslaught come THREE MEN bearing a long white flag.

CLOSE THE BOYS--They stop and look as the riders walk in.

RUDD
Flank dab--go and meet 'em.

DURHAM
Not again.

DUNNISON
Whatta' you expect.

THE CLEARING--In front of the trench, choked with dead--the heart of the battlefield. The three men are Americans.

CLOSE--THE BANDIT EMISSARIES--All are American. The LEADER has a note under the hammer of his rifle and a white flag tied to the barrel. He is a balding man quite big and well dressed in Mexican finery. The OTHER TWO are slick customers, dandified punks with sneering countenances, and silver trimmed gun belts. All are mounted on blooded stock and well fed. Armstrong walks out from one end of the trench with Sandoval behind him on horseback. The Boys come from the other end where they meet.

ARMSTRONG
Who is he Casoose?

SANDOVAL
He is Doc Headly--and he is in the book.

DOC HEADLY (to Sandoval)
I know who you are--You're the Devil's bastard.

SANDOVAL
I'll cut your head off one night--with a little knife.

ARMSTRONG
Alright Casoose.

DOC HEADLY
You ain't McNelly.

ARMSTRONG
You got something for Cap'n--You give it up.

DOC HEADLY
This from the Chief Justice of the Sovereign State of Tamaulipas. It is addressed to the Commander of the invasion forces and that ain't you.

ARMSTRONG
Hand me that letter.

DOC HEADLY
How many men you got--you are few--we are many.

Suddenly they feel the presence of McNelly who walks up behind Casoose.

MCNELLY
We got enough men to ride from here to Mexico City.

DOC HEADLY
Ride? You got no horses?

MCNELLY
You got enough.

DOC HEADLY
You have invaded Mexico and killed our beloved Alcalde--and taken his pistol. Eighty of our citizens lay dead--

ARMSTRONG
It'll be eighty three if you don't stop jawin'.

DUNNISON
Can I have his spurs and guns?

DURHAM
I want his coat and horse.

ARMSTRONG
The letter.

He hands the whole rifle to Armstrong, who passes it on to McNelly.

MCNELLY
What is this? I don't read well--Linc.

Dunnison steps towards him.

DOC HEADLY
It is La Capitulation.

MCNELLY
No habla Capitulation.

DOC HEADLY
Surrender.

MCNELLY
We don't have that word in Texas--You oughta' know that by now.

He hands the note back to Armstrong and Headly--keeps the rifle.

MCNELLY (CONT'D)
I want all stolen stock delivered to Major Clendenhen on the Texas side. I further want our stock killed in this disagreement replaced.

DOC HEADLY
Disagreement--it's a goddamn war.

MCNELLY
This is a police action--war is something worse. You have until noon to comply in full.

DOC HEADLY
Or?

MCNELLY
Or I'll give you one hour's notice before we attack.

HEADLY
You attack?

DURHAM
That's what the Cap'n said.

Headly takes out a jug from his saddlebag--pulls the cork and tips it up. He drinks long then offers the jug to Armstrong.

HEADLY
You want a smile?

ARMSTRONG
We don't drink on duty.

McNelly turns.

MCNELLY
I see no future in bandying words with a drunk.

The Rangers back up--only McNelly turns his back on them. The three bandits back up and ride away.

CUT TO:

A BOAT--Makes a landing on the Ranger's beachhead. Captain Randlett steps out with SEVERAL BLACK TROOPS--they carry huge pots and sacks of food. The Rangers cheer.

POT--SIMMERING--With stew over a good fire. Scipio stirs and looks out at the Boys with a smile. First in line is Durham.

MCNELLY--Leaning against a tree--eating his stew. Randlett stands next to him with a note.

RANDLETT
"Advise Captain McNelly return. You are directed not to support him while he remains in Mexican territory. If McNelly attacks, render him no assistance." --What's your answer Captain?

MCNELLY
The answer is no.

RANDLETT
Anything else?

MCNELLY
Plain no.

RANDLETT
I can't.

MCNELLY
Linc Dunnison! Come here Son.

Dunnison does--fumbles in his vest for his paper and lead pencil.

MCNELLY (CONT'D)
You ready Son?

He gets it.

DUNNISON
Yes Sir.

MCNELLY
"Near Las Cuevas Mex., November 20, 1875. I shall remain in Mexico with my Rangers and return at my discretion when work is done. My compliments to the Secretary of War and tell him to go to hell. Signed Captain Lee McNelly, Officer Commanding, Texas Rangers."

CUT TO:

DUNNISON--DURHAM--In their hole--on the line, rifles ready. Captain Randlett and two of his men look out with them--Randlett through his field glasses.

DURHAM
Sir?

RANDLETT
Yes Son.

DURHAM
You're going back over soon?

RANDLETT
I'm afraid I have to.

DURHAM
Will you take Berry.

He nods at the bank where five bodies are covered.

RANDLETT
I'd have to take them all--I don't--

DURHAM
He's got a family in El Sauz. Don't let him stay in the ground here.

RANDLETT
I'll see what I can do.

Suddenly there's dust in the brush at the far side of the clearing. Before Randlett can raise his glasses--cattle break out trotting, being driven by MEXICAN PEASANT DROVERS.

RANDLETT (CONT'D)
Cattle--

DUNNISON
Our cattle!

DURHAM
King Ranch cattle--I can see the brand.

RANDLETT
We won!

DURHAM
Yee Haw-w!

MONTAGE--RANGERS--Howling in delight. Throwing their hats in the air. The last is McNelly who even manages a smile.

CUT TO:

THE STOLEN HERD--Crossing the Rio Grande, stretched out from bank to bank. All along the way are MEXICAN PEASANT COWBOYS and mounted Texas Rangers. On the United States bank are the troops, mostly Black and shiny faced. Their faded blue hats are thrown back on their heads, and they stand and cheer as the Rangers swim their horses up with the cattle, and get out shaking water. As Dunnison and Durham come up, we see they are leading a horse with Berry's stiff body wrapped up in blankets--tied over the saddle. The Black soldiers cheer, grab their hands, and put them on their shoulders.

SOLDIER
Nice work Texas.

OTHER SOLDIER
You make us proud Boy.

STILL ANOTHER
I wish I was with you Reb.

AND ANOTHER
They'll remember you--Ranger.

And the word seems to catch--all their tongues, in the air--"Ranger"--"Texas Ranger". And the Boys are wearing their stars. A YOUNG KID named CALDICOTT carries the guidon with the flag and it's one Lone Star.

CUT TO:

MCNELLY--Sitting his horse on a little ridge in front of them all. They stand next to their mounts. The soldiers are crowded around in the background.

MCNELLY
I guess you all know--things'll be different in the Nueces strip. From this day on, ordinary folks'll be able to live and grow and do the things people got a right to do. You can be proud of that. Now you all eat, sleep and tomorrow I'll need two dabs to take these beeves back to Cap'n King.

Durham's hand shoots up, followed by Dunnison.

RUDD
I guess he misses Captain King's coffee.

They all laugh and Durham laughs the loudest.

CUT TO:

THE GATE--SANTA GERTRUDIS--Dust in the distance--stock coming in. Captain King and his VAQUEROS ride out from the house to the main gate. They are followed by his daughter and two nieces. Captain King scans the oncoming herd with field glasses.

(CONTINUED)

KING
Well I'll be damned--those Boys brought 'em back. Looks like all of 'em.

CAROLINE
Can I see Uncle?

He hands her the glasses. She looks and lowers them. Then she thinks about it, and turns her horse and rides towards the house.

KING
Is she sweet on one a' them Boys?

DAUGHTER
I believe so.

A VAQUERO shrugs.

CUT TO:

PENS--The cattle milling about as they're moved into a large corral. The Boys, expert now, have no trouble with them. King rides up to Sandoval who is in charge.

SANDOVAL
Capitan McNelly, he is travelling with the Rangers. They be a day or two more.

KING
Well you send word back that they'll be one fandango waitin' for him.

SANDOVAL
He's kind of sick. I don't think he's going to dance much.

KING
You get him here and Henrietta's food'll--

SANDOVAL
I don't think so. Capitan McNelly, he's been playing a game with Senor Death-- I think he won this time but no one wins forever.

King looks out over the steers. Dunnison rides up.

DUNNISON
What're you going to do with 'em Cap'n?

KING
That's a good question Son. I ain't gonna' eat 'em.

He signals.

CONTINUED:

KING (CONT'D)
Rodrigo--Peralta!

His TWO VAQUEROS look over.

KING (CONT'D)
These are the only stock we ever got back from banditos. It's a new day--so cut half the left horn from every steer. Set 'em free to wander for the rest of their lives.

DISSOLVE TO:

CORRAL--The gate thrown open. The vaqueros yell and wave their ropes and the steer run out onto the endless expanse of the King Ranch--only it all seems to happen in a dream, slow motion, the voices disembodied. All of it seems somehow remembered as if what happened at the river can never be completely forgotten and time is colored by it.

## PART III

"And all of us are wounded,
Our noble Captain slain.
The sun, it shines now sadly
Upon the bloody plain.
As brave and great a Ranger
As ever rode the West,
Was buried by his Comrades
With a bullet through his breast.

And now my song has ended,
I guess I sung enough.
The life of any Ranger,
You see, is very tough.
And if you have a mother,
And she don't want you to roam,
I advise you by experience, Boy,
You better stay at home."

The Texas Ranger

--a song of the 1870's

THE FANDANGO

BUNKHOUSE--The great barracks like structure near the barn--this is where the ranch hands, as many as eighty at a time live during roundups. The six Rangers are led inside by Sandoval and King.

KING
You'll find everything you need--There's fresh cut wood, and them tubs is already full. When you get cleaned up, come on over to the house. Supper is an hour after sundown.

They all look around the cavernous place.

KING (CONT'D)
Everything alright?

Durham turns to him.

DURHAM
Sir? Are there going to be Ladies present at supper?

KING
Why yes Son--Why?

DURHAM
We're all ragged and such--unfit for Ladies the way we are.

KING
That's what the hot water's for.

DURHAM
Well I'd feel out a' place--I just can't be sittin' at no linen table like I am, Sir.

KING
The rest of you feel that way?

RANGER
No.

DUNNISON
You stay here George--We'll get someone to bring your food over.

DURHAM
I'd sure appreciate that.

King leaves shaking his head.

DISSOLVE TO:

TWILIGHT--DURHAM--Sits in a tub of hot water and watches through the window as the others walk over to the big house. He scrubs his back with his brush, pours himself more hot water, and sits back to relax.

CLOSE DURHAM--His eyes close and he sits back in the tub.

DISSOLVE TO:

IMAGES--That drift across his subconscious mind: The riders coming at them ghostlike, through the fog--He and Berry counting out bullets and laying them out--Horses writhing and vaulting over--Dunnison and him bending Berry's stiff body over his saddle and tying it. Finally the dark figure of McNelly, his cape blowing in the rain as he took them forward.

CUT TO:

NIGHT--CLOSE DURHAM--His eyes open. He hears a door bang shut at the big house. He looks out the window and sees a FIGURE in the darkness carrying a lantern towards the bunkhouse. It's now that he realizes he's in darkness, he's been asleep, and forgot to light a lantern. The distant big house glows with light from its windows, and its warmth only makes him aware of his loneliness. The door to the bunkhouse opens.

DURHAM
Who's there.

CAROLINE
George?

He can't speak. He sees her face in the light of her lantern.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)
Light your lantern George.

He fumbles.

DURHAM
You won't look now will you?

He gets the lantern lit. She walks right up towards him.

DURHAM (CONT'D)
Stay there--stay there! I'm naked, stark naked!

CAROLINE
I brought you some clothes. They belong to Uncle. That's what you were worried about wasn't it? That I'd--I mean we would see you all dirty and poor.

DURHAM
Cap'n King's clothes--I can't take his clothes too.

(CONTINUED)

CAROLINE
Oh you be quiet. Here you were all worried how you'd look. And look at you now.

DURHAM
You can't see me this way. Stop or I'll blow out the lantern.

She puts the clothes down on a bunk.

CAROLINE
Then you'll have to come get 'em. There's no secrets between you and me George Durham.

DURHAM
Turn your back.

She shrugs and turns around. He gets out of the tub wrapping himself in a blanket like an Indian. He hobbles over, grabs the clothes--holds them against himself.

DURHAM (CONT'D)
I'll put 'em on right quick--Be over there if that's what you want.

She turns around, looks at him. They stare at each other. She steps to him and throws her arms around him and kisses him full on the mouth. He tries to hold up his clothes and blanket, but he kisses her back. It's a long passionate kiss filled with frustration and young lust--but finally it ends. She steps back, he holds onto his blanket, and she runs out. He is left standing there in the empty bunk house.

DURHAM (smiling)
Ain't life something--go from the Gates of Hell to the Steps of Heaven without a change in the weather.

DISSOLVE TO:

THE GREAT ROOM--Of the big house--festooned with Japanese lanterns and colorful ribbons. The room is crowded with the Ranger Company and Richard King's most trusted WORKERS. All the FAMILIES are here and not a few SENORITAS. Henrietta plays the piano and sings with Armstrong--a stomping rendition of "Dixie".

All the Rangers are now dressed well--dark wool coats and vests, new sombreros, shiny gunbelts and badges. In the foreground on the verandah sits Dunnison with TWO of the PRETTIEST YOUNG GIRLS in the country. He's telling them something, it doesn't matter what. All that matters is the willingness in their eyes. A great cake is rolled in by Caroline, King's daughter, and his other niece. Everyone crowds around it. On the cake it reads in chocolate icing-- "TO MCNELLY'S RANGERS FROM THE THREE MISS KINGS". Everyone cheers and Sandoval slices it up.

CUT TO:

THE LOCAL MUSICIANS--Aided by Henrietta, play a slow Scottish jig. It is peculiar and haunting. Several try and dance to it, only Rudd seems successful.

RUDD
It's a jig--am I not correct Madame?

HENRIETTA
You are correct--it's Scottish--can anyone do a jig? Richard--

KING
Not me I'm too drunk.

DURHAM
I can do it--It's the only dancin' I know.

They turn around. George Durham looks about five years older--but more--he's no longer even a trace of a boy. His fine dark coat and pants give him the authority of a seasoned Ranger. If clothes make the man, these have helped. He takes Caroline by the hand.

DUNNISON
Where'd you learn such a thing?

DURHAM
My Daddy taught me.

By God--he's graceful and skilled. The haunting nature of the melody becomes faster and more complex, and so does his dancing. But Caroline responds in kind, and whirls about with an unexpected flair. People clear out of the way--and suddenly as the tempo increases, the dance becomes something more. It is the dance of life--of man proud, arrogant, and a bit foolish--and woman mysterious, sensual and deceptive. Yet they are linked, especially these two--and in this dance their entire lives can be glimpsed from passionate sexuality to procreation to tender care to violent argument to the passage of time and age. It is all in the dance which goes faster and faster.

MONTAGE--The faces of all who know them, and see something eternal in their motion--King and Henrietta who know this is a mating dance--Dunnison, Sandoval, Old Frank--who see their comrade pass to another place before them--and finally McNelly who sits in the background, pale and dying and watches the reaffirmation of life.

LONG--THE FANDANGO--The dance ends--its participants covered in sweat staring at each other--and everyone claps and howls.

DISSOLVE TO:

HORSEMEN PASS BY

A SOLITARY RIDER--Alone on a bluff, silhouetted against the deepening shadows and clouds turning amber. He raises his field glasses and scans the endless horizon. It is Dunnison, his clothes are well fitted now, and his leather has a shiny patina. All his gear is in the right place--everything tied or strapped so it doesn't jingle. He is the image of the Texas Lawman, and though he's no older, his youth has fled, replaced by a hardened young manhood.

CLOSE DURHAM--He watches him in the foreground, and rides up to meet him. Together they ride down the bluff.

DUNNISON (V.O.)
"Well Dad, by now you've read every account of our fracas on the wrong side of the river. Don't believe the political balderdash about us slaughtering innocents. There's still influential parties that would profit by the banditry that we Rangers put an end to."

CUT TO:

THE PAIR--Riding briskly towards the big house at Santa Gertrudis.

DUNNISON (V.O.) (CONT'D)
"The State turned their back on the Captain but he hasn't got much time left and pays it little mention. George and I've been scouting but it seems this land's now pretty tame."

CUT TO:

THE PAIR--Tying their horses in front of the verandah. Old Frank sits in a wicker rocker, trying to let the last rays of the sun illuminate the last pages of "Les Miserables".

DUNNISON
Almost done with it?

FRANK
Just a little bit left.

DUNNISON
Well--what happened--the law ever catch him or did he get away?

FRANK
He got away--grew old--nothing left to do but die.

He smiles contentedly thinking about it.

DURHAM
Cap'n call us in?

FRANK
In a manner of speaking.

DURHAM
He ain't gonna last much longer--maybe--

FRANK
He wants to see you.

They take their hats off and go in.

CUT TO:

HENRIETTA KING--Standing outside a doorway and hall.

HENRIETTA
No spurs George--were you born in a barn?

They fumble to remove their spurs.

DURHAM
Yes Ma'am--Sorry Ma'am.

DUNNISON
Don't know what's got into us.

He stands up.

DUNNISON (CONT'D)
Ma'am?

HENRIETTA
What is it Linc?

DUNNISON
What's he wanta' see ME for? I thought he hated me.

HENRIETTA
No Lincoln, you're dead wrong. He liked you, maybe the best of all--You see, Captain McNelly was a man who lost everything--his wife and family--the War. And you two were something he found.

She opens the door.

HENRIETTA (CONT'D)
Now keep quiet.

She leads them into a gaily colored room with flowers. McNelly pale, drawn and dying sits up in a bed at the window watching the sunset. Scipio, haggard and worn, sits on a chair at the foot of the bed. Armstrong sits outside in a rocker with a shotgun.

MCNELLY
Come on over here--into the light Boys.

HENRIETTA
I'll get a lantern, Leander.

MCNELLY
No, I like this time of day. God you two look grand. Ain't life somethin'.

They don't know what to say. A tear rolls down Dunnison's face and he sniffs.

MCNELLY (CONT'D)
What's that for? When it comes your time Linc, you'll be lucky to be as proud as I am. Death can't be so bad Son--no Ranger's ever come back to bitch about it.

They smile. McNelly laughs and coughs.

MCNELLY (CONT'D)
I--I just wanted to see you two before I heard something else you done wrong.

They nod uneasy.

MCNELLY (CONT'D)
I keep thinking of General Stonewall Jackson and what he said--"Let us go across the river and rest under the trees."

He looks out the window--a tear rolls down his gaunt cheek. Henrietta motions for them to leave--they start out. He turns back--stops them.

MCNELLY (CONT'D)
Boys--I'll be waiting there for you--
Dismissed--

CUT TO:

A GRAVESITE--At the center of the King Ranch cemetery. Six Ranger pallbearers--Rudd, Armstrong, the Boys, Old Frank and Jesus Sandoval lower McNelly's coffin into the ground. At the head of the grave is a huge granite headstone which still stands today. Next to it is another recent grave--the stone reading--"BERRY SMITH 1859--1875 TEXAS RANGERS--A DASHING HORSEMAN, A TRUE FRIEND, A FEARED ENEMY". All of the KING PEOPLE and all the Rangers attend, plus MANY from the surrounding countryside including Captain Randlett and a CONTINGENT OF BLACK 24th INFANTRY. When the coffin is lowered, a military firing squad fires the usual salute. Scipio, overcome by grief throws himself into the grave crying hysterically and mumbling something about his little boy.

CLOSE--DURHAM--DUNNISON--They help pull Scipio out.

SCIPIO
Ain't nowhere--nowhere to go. He freed me--free to do what--I ain't got nowhere to go Cap'n--

Henrietta takes him and wipes the tears from his eyes and comforts him like a child while the BUGLER plays taps. Captain King reaches down and drops a folded Confederate flag on the coffin.

DISSOLVE TO:

ADIOS COMPANEROS

THE RANGER COMPANY--Only about twenty left. They stand at attention. MAJOR JOHN B. JONES from Austin shakes Rudd's hand.

JONES
You may proceed, Captain Armstrong.

Armstrong turns around. The wind blows briskly. He looks to Rudd.

ARMSTRONG
Are the Rangers present, Lieutenant Rudd?

RUDD
Yes Sir--Sandoval, Dunnison front and center.

Dunnison marches up smartly--stands ramrod tall.

ARMSTRONG (to Sandoval)
The Sovereign State of Texas does hereby confer upon you rank of Sergeant--
(to Dunnison)
And you the rank of Corporal--to be effective from this day forward. Congratulations.

He begins to pin a gold Ranger badge on Dunnison's chest.

CUT TO:

VERANDA--DURHAM AND CAROLINE--Durham is also standing stiff. He's nervous. Out the door comes Captain King.

KING
You wanted to see me Son? Why aren't you at formation?

DURHAM
I'm not cut out for it Sir.

He looks around.

KING
Caroline--

(CONTINUED)

She goes inside.

KING (CONT'D)
Well Son?

DURHAM
Governor has cut the Outfit down.

KING
But what about you? I thought you loved Captain McNelly and the work.

DURHAM
Sir--I am a McNelly--I'll be a McNelly all my life and when I die I plan to find the Cap'n and ride with him if he's still runnin' an Outfit.

KING
What are you looking for?

DURHAM
A job. I came here from Georgia on my horse Judy. I wanted to make a life for myself--a decent life--and all I've done-- is kill people.

KING
You ever work stock?

DURHAM
The only trade I know is chopping cotton and this.

He pats his pistol.

KING
We don't have any cotton that needs chopping right now--But I could use someone to ride with me in the buggy. Besides you're a right fine dancer. See the bookkeeper Son. Sixty dollars a month.

Durham bursts into a smile. Caroline rushes out and hugs him. King is embarrassed.

KING (CONT'D)
One thing at time Son.

DISSOLVE TO:

OLD FRANK--DUNNISON--Frank is packing his horse as Dunnison rides by.

DUNNISON
Where you going Frank?

FRANK
Missoura'.

DUNNISON
What for?

FRANK
My brother and I run a business up there.

DUNNISON
Oh yeah--what's he in?

FRANK
We rob trains for a living.

DUNNISON
What!

FRANK
Name's James, Frank James--you might a' heard a' me an' my brother Jesse.

DUNNISON
You're telling me the truth aren't you?

FRANK
You'll believe anything but--Yes I'm telling you the truth.

DUNNISON
What were you doing--

FRANK
Hiding out--letting things cool down. 'Cept it turned out the most dangerous work I ever done in my life. Cap'n told me that, but I didn't believe him. Damnedest thing I ever done.

He swings into the saddle.

FRANK (CONT'D)
If you're ever up in Clay County--leave your badge in your pocket. You going up to San Antone'?

DUNNISON
Yep--looking to find Wes Hardin and Pete Marsele.

FRANK
Get your things together. We can ride that far.

DUNNISON
I gotta' say goodbye to someone.

CUT TO:

DUNNISON--Standing hat in hand in front of Durham and Caroline.

CAROLINE
You know I know you, Linc. You'll never have a place that's warm to eat supper in. Oh the gals they'll love you, all handsome tall and strong, but you'll always ride away. So when the wind pushes you this way, I want you to know we'll always be a home for you.

She looks at George.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)
You brought him back to me and I'll always be grateful.

DUNNISON
No--it's the other way around--but he'll never tell you.

He formally embraces Caroline and the Durham. They look at each other--he swings up into the saddle.

DUNNISON (CONT'D)
Adios Compadre.

DURHAM
Vaya con Dios.

He tips his hat and rides.

CUT TO:

THE GATE--OF THE KING RANCH--Greatest Ranch in the world. Dunnison and Frank ride through and out onto the prairie.

DUNNISON (V.O.)
"So Father I wish I could have been more of what you and Mother wanted--but I'm happy with what I am--And I am your loving Son." Linc Dunnison--Corporal of Rangers--Texas 1876.

THE END

## EPILOGUE

John Westley Hardin--Was captured after a gunfight on a train in Florida by Captain Armstrong and Sergeant Dunnison, Texas Rangers. He served out a sentence at Huntsville Prison, and was killed in an El Paso gunfight in 1896.

King Fisher--His power broken by the Rangers, he tried his hand at politics, but was shot by his own men while attending the opera in San Antonio.

George Durham--Married Caroline, and became the beloved and respected Foreman of the King Ranch. He lived well into his eighties.

Lincoln Dunnison--Became a Captain of Rangers and a United States Federal Marshall in New Mexico. Settled in Texas, where he became a successful oilman. Later, an influence in Texas politics.

Frank James--Survived his outlaw brother, and was granted amnesty in 1882. Lived to a ripe old age entertaining at carnivals and fairs.

Pete Marsele--Was never found.

The Texas Rangers--Exist today under the Texas Department of Public Safety. They are without question the finest and most colorful Law Enforcement Agency in the world.